

Poles in the Wehrmacht? Proposals and Discussions 1939-1945. An Outline of the Issue¹

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The following account is a translation of the fine research conducted by Polish historian Jerzy Kochanowski. I felt that this was an important body of research to present to English speakers as well as the Revisionist community for two reasons: first, it undermines the “cannon fodder” thesis espoused by far too many historians and laymen alike. Too many researchers continue to labor under the false impression that the NS-Germans “threw” foreign soldiers against the USSR out of racial hatred or disrespect. I have already addressed other evidence that contradicts this allegation, so I will not reiterate those proofs here. All I want to say is that we have here another body of evidence substantiating my thesis and negating those who claim the ‘Nazis’ merely used and abused their foreign volunteers and conscripts. So, in this respect, this is worthwhile. The Poles volunteered in extremely limited numbers for combat service; yet, they accommodated for their lackluster military involvement via labor. Hitler accepted their labor and in fact preferred it over actual combat service.

Second, this research adds to a growing body of evidence supporting the ‘Nazi diversity’ angle among English language readers. While the ‘Nazis’ commenced the war with a particular ‘racio-hierarchical’ idea in mind regarding the ‘high place’ Germans would assume in the new, postwar Europe, this idea was forced to yield owing to the exigencies of the war. As I continue to argue – and I am not alone – the ‘Nazis’ were forced to foster their own brand of diversity as the war progressed. The eventual inclusion of Poles in this diversity schema is a development about which most English readers remain ignorant. Thus, this translation and the accompanying photos throughout are meant to assist English readers with a brief, yet well-rounded introduction to the subject.

Had someone conducted an inspection of all German troops on the Eastern Front in the years 1942-1943, they might have been amazed at how many soldiers spoke little or no German. The mandated recruitment of “ethnic Germans,” viewed as an effective means of Germanization, commenced at the start of the war. On Polish soil, particularly in Upper Silesia, about 250,000 people were mobilized; in Belgian Eupen-Malmédy, about 8,000; in Slovenia, about 35,000. In Alsace, Lorraine, and Luxembourg, where conscription into the Wehrmacht was introduced in August

1942, a total of about 140,000 men were drafted. As recruits gradually ran out, increasingly broader and less “German” groups on the “*Volksliste*” were included in the recruitment. Additionally, ethnic Germans from allied states, such as Hungary, where about 120,000 “Hungarian Germans” were drafted into the SS by the end of 1944, were also included.² By June 1944, it was calculated that about 200,000 ethnic Germans from Southeast Europe served in the Waffen-SS and the German police.³ When it came to military service attitudes varied widely among the conscripted “ethnic Germans.” Some complied with recruitment without resistance. However, a more widespread attitude was one of rejection of the war, often triggered by the discrimination faced by ethnic Germans who spoke poor German.

Special Unit white and red (in composition)
(SS) Waffen-Scharführer Józef Kompał
(SS) Waffen-Oberscharführer Maciej Cebul
(SS) Waffen-Rottenführer Jan Piotrowicz
(SS) Waffen-Sturmmann Adam Politański
(SS) Waffen-Untersturmführer Józef Paweł Radomski-Bronowicki

During World War II, approximately 1.5 million volunteers, who did not have even distant German roots, fought in the Wehrmacht, SS, Navy, Air Force, Gendarmerie, Police, and various auxiliary services.⁴ The volunteers came from both occupied territories (including the British Channel Islands) as well as from Allied and neutral states—Switzerland, Spain, Portugal, Sweden, Turkey, India, Palestine, Tunisia. There were Irish as well as citizens of Canada or the United States. The volunteers fought in their own national units as well as in German units.

Various motives played a role in one’s decision to fight with Germany. Sometimes it was about fighting against the colonial power (for Indians and Arabs) or against the hegemonic nation (for Croats and Slovenians), sometimes about anti-communist reformist goals (Vlasov Army) or anti-communist independence aspirations (for Ukrainians, Caucasian, and Baltic peoples).⁵ For the vast majority of former soldiers of the Red Army, it was mainly about escaping the nightmare of captivity—considering that out of the 5.7 million Soviet prisoners of war, an estimated 3.3 million perished. While practically all Latvians cited “patriotism” and “anti-communism” as motives for joining the SS, 39.9% of a studied group of Danish volunteers stated political convictions as the reason for joining the German army, 23.9% sought adventure, 12.5% were fleeing from problems (including family-related issues), 11.2% had sympathy for the Germans, and 6.4% were unemployed.⁶

However, there were no Polish units that participated in the fighting on the German side, at least not in any way that emphasized their national character. On the one hand, this stemmed from the attitude of Polish society, the majority of whom definitively rejected any cooperation with the occupiers. On the other hand, the Poles owe their reputation as “the only nation without a Quisling”⁷ to Hitler’s stance. Hitler consistently rejected proposals to form Polish armed units, which were submitted to him by certain sectors of the German establishment as well as certain Polish circles, until the end of 1944. After the end of the September campaign, Poland was in a state of deep disappointment and collective stress. Although the idea of reaching an agreement with the Germans was not very widespread, it was occasionally addressed. The memoirs of Władysław Studnicki, the most well-known Polish Germanophile,⁸ contain a grain of truth when he wrote in the autumn of 1939:

People from the older generation, who came from various social strata and represented different political directions, came to me. There were workers, craftsmen, members of the Peasant Party, representatives of the professional intelligentsia, especially lawyers, journalists, industrialists, and many nobles. They believed that negotiations with Germany were necessary, that a National Committee should be formed, and a delegation should be sent to Berlin. One had to save what could be saved.⁹

The basis of understanding should be the expected German-Soviet conflict. Studnicki explained to the German commander of Warsaw: “*You don’t have the manpower to occupy the territories. You will lose the war without the reestablishment of Poland, without the formation of a Polish army.*”¹⁰ Karl von Neuman-Neurode asked him to present his arguments in writing. Studnicki didn’t hesitate and handed him a duplicated brochure entitled: “*Memorandum on a Polish Army and the forthcoming German-Soviet War*” on November 20, 1939.¹¹

Such an army, which would have to be formed by a provisional Polish government, could occupy the territories up to the Dnieper after a potential campaign against Russia, while the Germans would secure the area up to the Don and the Caucasus. Studnicki raised the (at the time) obvious question of German trust in such an army. He saw no problems as long as the army was not deployed in the west. “*If the slogan is ‘War against Russia’, there is no reason for any concerns or doubts, because it would be the greatest misfortune for the Polish people if the whole of Poland fell under the rule of Soviet Russia.*” An organization created by Studnicki would take over the selection of suitable officers who had sufficient

“*understanding of the danger.*” The army should not be large—a few divisions of infantry and cavalry without an air force or armored units. According to Studnicki, this would reassure Germany that Poland was no threat.

The German leadership in the General Government [G.G.] had a different opinion, as they had assigned a different role to the Poles in this war. Hans Frank prohibited the distribution of the memorandum, especially among the officers of the *Wehrmacht*. Studnicki was undeterred and in January 1940 sent both this memorandum and another one protesting against the increasingly brutal policies in occupied Poland to the former German ambassador in Warsaw, von Moltke, and thereafter to Hitler, Göring, and Goebbels. However, the Minister of Propaganda shattered Studnicki’s illusions: “*I know that you have always been an enemy of Russia. [...] But today, you are inconvenient for us. You can become harmful and even dangerous.*”¹²

The highly informed Ludwik Landau, who could assess moods and attitudes in Polish society very well, doubted in his daily written “*Chronicle of War and Occupation*” that there could be an understanding between the occupiers and Polish society; and that the Germans would be willing to offer conditions “*that would be acceptable even for the most conciliatory politician; Studnicki alone is not enough.*”¹³ On the other hand, he wrote on March 18, 1940:

There are indeed many people who try to buy the favor of the occupiers, and as the situation worsens, there will be more. I heard from Krakow that this phenomenon has reached a considerable extent there—people who have any ‘merits’ even from Austrian times dig out old documents and try in this way to win the favor of the new masters.¹⁴

In the summer of 1940, as tensions between the Soviet Union and Germany increased, the mood improved in favor of creating Polish units. People anticipated a war. In early July 1940, Landau noted how the appearance of loudspeakers in the streets of Warsaw nourished the expectation among the common people that “*through the loudspeakers, they would soon be called upon to join an army, to join some units directed against the Bolsheviks, the actual enemies of Poland.*”¹⁵ There were rumors that recruitment had already begun in the provinces, including Grodzisk Mazowiecki, not far from Warsaw.¹⁶ The writer Stanisław Rembek, who lived in Grodzisk Mazowiecki, wrote in his diary on July 3, 1940—apparently without negative connotations: “*It is said that the Germans are forming some anti-Bolshevik legions from Polish prisoners of war.*”¹⁷ Three days later, the author of

“Judgment on Franciszek Klos,” a man of the Left, told the writer Wacław Sieroszewski, whom he met on the street, that *“we should start negotiating with the Germans to save what is left of Poland and to possess some kind of armed force in case of a general Bolshevik revolution, which in my opinion poses a great danger considering the devastation of almost the whole of Europe.”*¹⁸ He found no agreement with the old writer. But Ferdinand Goetel, a writer whom he met on the same day, not only agreed with him but even said that *“something is already happening in this direction, but it won’t start before autumn.”*¹⁹

When war with the USSR broke out a year later, the Germans were not interested in another initiative by Władysław Studnicki, who wanted to *“mobilize the Poles”* and propagate the neutrality of the Polish underground in the conflict. This time, Studnicki was imprisoned in the Pawiak prison in Warsaw for over a year. It is difficult to say to what extent the idea of the old Germanophile correlated with the sentiments that prevailed at the time—in the areas occupied by the Soviets between autumn 1939 and the end of June 1941—where part of the population was temporarily willing to cooperate with the Germans in the fight against the hated *“Soviets.”* The London underground was aware of this readiness and sought a solution. *“Initially, the aim was to counteract fraternization in the conquered territories, so that there would be no alliance in favor of the involvement of the local population in the German forces in the Eastern territories,”* recalls Zbigniew Koźliński.

The fear that the youth would willingly join the German forces in the fight against the Bolsheviks was not unfounded. The Germans were greeted here with enthusiasm. It happened that farmers, out of gratitude, voluntarily brought them their cows, had masses said for them, and erected triumphal arches for them. When the Spanish Blue Division arrived in our area, they were warmly welcomed, and the soldiers were plied with alcohol [...] In the first days of their offensive, the Germans freed many Poles from Soviet prisons, and prayers were said for them in the churches for this reason.²⁰

The Germans failed to exploit this willingness to cooperate, except for occasional assistance in capturing Red Army soldiers, local communists, or Jews. However, attempts were still made to influence the attitude of the Poles via propaganda. In August 1941, huge screens were set up at some points in Warsaw, showing foreign volunteers on their way to the Eastern Front, accompanied by a corresponding commentary: *“All of Europe is fighting communism [...] Italians, Spaniards, Belgians, Norwegians, Dutch, Danes, Croats, Slovaks, Hungarians, and*

*Romanians stand alongside the German soldier on the Eastern Front. And where are you, Pole?”*²¹ After a counteraction of “*little sabotage*,” this propaganda strip was no longer shown.



FIGURE 1. *Already in 1941, tens of thousands of Poles from Upper Silesia joined the ranks of the Wehrmacht (public domain). Source: <https://wielkahlstoria.pl/ilu-polakow-sluzyllo-w-wehrmachcie-podczas-ii-wojny-swiatowej/> (accessed June 11, 2024).*

The showing of this propaganda film was certainly not due to any exceeding of authority by a propaganda officer but was the result of a deliberate decision by the leadership of the General Government, although not coordinated with Berlin, which from time to time sought to soften the fear somewhat to give the impression of reconciliation with the Poles. This was observable in the spring of 1943 when German propaganda in the General Government, resorting to slogans about the Jewish-Bolshevik threat, exploited the Katyn affair.²² On May 17, 1943, alongside the lists of names of the murdered officers, “*reader letters*” were published in the “*New Warsaw Courier*” calling for a fight against the Jews and Bolsheviks. There was a rumor that General Bortnowski was offered leadership of a Polish anti-Bolshevik legion but declined. Two weeks later, Landau noted in his diary that despite the continued terror,



FIGURE 2. *A Polish soldier in the Wehrmacht taken prisoner by General Maczek's 1st Armored Division in Normandy (public domain). Source: <https://wielkahaistoria.pl/ilu-polakow-sluzylow-wehrmachcie-podczas-ii-wojny-swiatowej/> (accessed June 11, 2024).*

the Germans entertain some hopes of reconciliation to exploit the Poles in the 'fight against Bolshevism for the defense of Europe.' For what other purpose could the renewed uproar over the Katyn affair serve? Today's 'rag' adds details about the victims, such as the medallions, signet rings, etc., found with them [...], and – most thought-provokingly – also reports on Kozłowski's visit to Katyn, who is generally considered a candidate for a Polish Quisling.²³



FIGURE 3. Unit commander and at the same time Untersturmführer Józef Paweł Radomski-Bronowicki. Source: <http://legionorlabialego.com/> (accessed June 8, 2024).

The propaganda surrounding General Vlasov's army and the recognition for their enthusiasm "*in the fight against the Bolsheviks*" became more pronounced. The Ukrainians, who allegedly "*massively*" volunteered for the SS Division Galicia in both Eastern Galicia and the eastern districts of the Krakow Voivodeship, were highlighted as an example. ***It was emphasized how numerous among them were soldiers and officers of the former Polish Army*** [emphasis added]. The mentioned reader letters to the editors of the collaborating newspapers became increasingly numerous and their messages increasingly explicit. "*The author of such a letter,*" Landau noted on May 29, 1943, "*enthusiastically declares that he is going to the front to fight against the Jews and the Bolsheviks and calls on all Poles to join him – the first clear attempt at recruitment.*"²⁴

Even parts of the police apparatus showed willingness to change their attitude towards the Poles. On April 20, 1943, Eberhard Schöngarth, the head of the Security Police in the G.G., said:

Some offices still refuse to understand that the previous attitude towards the Polish people was inappropriate in many respects. One must finally muster the courage to change direction. The Polish people represent a war material of inestimable value to us. If we want to win the victory, we must without exception enlist them in the service of Germany.²⁵

This sentiment is reflected by an initiative of the group “*Sword and Plow*” (*Miecz i Plug*), ***which had been collaborating with the German political police in the Radom district since 1941 [emphasis added]***.²⁶ Before May 21, 1943, the leadership of the organization in Berlin submitted a memorandum, written by Anatol Słowikowski (“*Andrzej Nieznany*”),²⁷ addressed to “*His Excellency Chancellor and Supreme Warlord Adolf Hitler*.” They claimed that unlike all other groups in the country – from National Democracy to the Home Army (AK) to the Communists – the group “*Sword and Plow*” represented a “*completely new movement*” whose worldview was based on unforgiving reality. They believed that now was the appropriate moment to “*fight shoulder to shoulder*” with the German armed forces against the enemies of Europe—the Bolsheviks. They proposed building armed forces, under German leadership, to fight against Bolshevism, “*with the help of Germany, the Wehrmacht, and the security organs*.” In addition, “*loyal*” cooperation in labor management and the economy was offered, “*relief*” of the German administration, “*ruthless*” combat with “*bandits, partisans, Jews, and Freemasons*” as well as with “*all foreign agencies*.” They pledged to prepare the Polish people for the “*final*” tasks after the war, which should be realized under the naturally recognized German leadership in Europe. Finally, it was declared that they would not make any conditions and were ready to prove their determination with “*sacrifice of blood*.” “*We are fully aware,*” the memorandum stated, “*that only in this way can we save the Polish people and our homeland from Bolshevization and downfall.*”

The proposal of the “*Sword and Plow*” group sparked correspondence between the Chief of the Reich Chancellery, Hans Lammers, Governor Hans Frank, and the Chief of the Reich Main Security Office, Ernst Kaltenbrunner, who were asked for their assessment. Both dismissed the proposal, citing the fact that “*Sword and Plow*” had very little influence in Polish society. It was noted that “*Sword and Plow*” was not only traditionally anti-Soviet but also anti-British, anti-Sikorski, and pro-German. Kaltenbrunner ended the discussion by stating:



FIGURE 4. *Volunteers from the General Government.* Source: <http://legionorlabialego.com/> (accessed June 8, 2024).

I consider it sufficient, given the current situation, for the connection to ‘Sword and Plow’ to continue to be maintained cautiously by the men of the security police entrusted with this task, who use this organization for their intelligence work against communist and other national-Polish resistance groups within the General Government and the incorporated eastern territories.²⁸

The fact that the proposal from “*Sword and Plow*” was rejected by both the RSHA and the leadership of the General Government did not mean that the idea of forming Polish armed forces was entirely discarded, especially as the human reserves of both the Wehrmacht and the SS were gradually depleting. During the same time when the negative response to the memorandum from “*Sword and Plow*” was being prepared, there was talk within the rival circles of the Nazi establishment about playing the “*Polish card*” accordingly. It was clear that Hitler himself would have to make a decision. It is possible that there was a race to see who would propose first. It was certainly no coincidence that on the same day – June 19, 1943 – two officials presented the idea to Hitler of calling upon the Poles to arms. The first was the leader of the SS, Heinrich Himmler, who did so not without prior consultation with the General Staff.²⁹ The second was Hans Frank, who in a detailed

memorandum on the occupation policy in Poland stated that the Katyn case created the right atmosphere for such an undertaking.³⁰ In both cases, Hitler's rejection was decisive. The Reich Main Security Office, when asked for an opinion on Frank's idea of recruiting Poles for the armed forces, stated that such recruitment would "*blur the absolutely necessary clear boundary lines between ethnic groups.*"³¹ And Frank, fearing that his initiative could further undermine his already weakened position (there were already rumors in May 1943 that he would soon be replaced by Arthur Greiser), escalated the terror to an unprecedented degree. On July 23, Landau wrote that Katyn was still on the agenda in the "*rag,*" but there were no longer any prospects of benefiting from this issue. "*The focus of propaganda in the General Government now lies more in emphasizing the strength and stability of German rule—both towards the Poles and the Germans.*"³²



FIGURE 5. Patch of the Polish unit in the Wehrmacht, Waffen SS. Source: <http://legionorlabialego.com/> (accessed June 8, 2024).

Despite the harshness of the occupation, the belief persisted that the Germans represented the only protection against the impending "*storm from the East*"—a rhetoric fondly borrowed from the period of a quarter-century earlier. This view was upheld by a segment of Polish society, especially—but not exclusively—by bourgeois circles. For these circles, as Landau wrote in late September 1943:

Bolshevism remained the embodiment of the most extreme and almost singular evil. Reasonably successful in coping with economic problems under occupation and less affected by political terror than perhaps other social groups, they were prepared to see Germany as a lesser evil than the Bolsheviks.³³



FIGURE 6. SS man Sielski. Source: <http://legionorlabialego.com/zdjecia> (accessed June 11, 2024).

This assessment of dangers did not equate to a willingness to don a uniform and fight on the German side, although German propaganda tried to create this impression. Alongside the typical and well-established methods of invoking a “*Jewish-Bolshevik threat*,” they began to use the letters and statements of Polish soldiers who had fled from the Tadeusz Kościuszko Division or were captured at places like Lenino.³⁴ The danger of Poland’s “*Bolshevization*” was linked with the “*betrayal*” of the West, creating a “*paradigm of the conspiracy of the Big Three against Poland*.”³⁵ The propaganda also emphasized the recruitment for Latvian and Estonian units. “*Is this an indication of the same tactic being implemented here as was already carried out in Latvia and Estonia and seems to be imminent in Lithuania—a mobilization?*” Landau asked. “*Probably not. The basis the Germans*

could rely on would be too narrow.”³⁶ Shortly thereafter, however, on January 20, 1944, he noted that rumors were circulating in Warsaw about the formation of a Polish communist government in Sarny, and that at the same time “*the particularly resonant rumor is that the Poles are to march with the Germans against the Bolsheviks, i.e., about a mobilization already ordered by the Germans, and this [...] in consultation with the Allies.*”³⁷

In this atmosphere, Hans Frank made another attempt to persuade Hitler to change the policy in the G.G. and to approve the formation of Polish military units. But during a meeting on February 6, 1944, Hitler immediately expressed his disapproval and put an end to any further development of such plans. He stated that he did not want to encourage the formation of a new Piłsudski army.³⁸ Hitler told Frank, “*What you [...] intend to say in your truly excellent speech to the foreign press is correct. The Poles should work, and the German soldier will defend both them and all of Europe from Bolshevism.*”³⁹ In fact, from the spring of 1944 onwards, signs of a somewhat milder course towards the Poles were observed. The leadership of the G.G. stopped public mass executions, and the ongoing repression was justified by the “*necessities of war.*” While maintaining the previous propaganda line about the “*Jewish-Bolshevik threat*” and the Polish tradition of fighting Bolshevism, the Germans sought ways to reach an understanding with various segments of Polish society. According to reports from the Delegation of the London-based Polish government-in-exile, Gestapo chiefs in Radom, Lublin, Przemyśl, and Tarnów made conciliatory gestures towards the Poles to win them over for a joint anti-communist action. In April 1944, the Gestapo in Radom organized a conference on their own initiative with Polish underground organizations about possible cooperation with German authorities in the Lublin region and possibly throughout the G.G. for a common fight against the Communists.⁴⁰ Efforts to persuade Wincenty Witos (three times the Prime Minister of Poland) to issue a corresponding declaration were unsuccessful.⁴¹ In March 1944, during a conversation with Warsaw Governor Fischer, Władysław Studnicki once again demanded the formation of Polish units alongside the Wehrmacht.⁴²

Attempts were also made to reach the Poles through other means. On April 17, 1944, the first issue of the biweekly magazine *Przełom* appeared in Krakow (for propaganda reasons, the place of publication was given as Raclawice). The magazine gave the appearance of being conspiratorial but was in fact inspired and controlled by the Germans. In the articles, which were written by authors including Feliks Burdecki and Jan Emil Skiwski, a call was made for a joint struggle against Bolshevism, creating the impression that this opinion was shared by parts of the

underground. Such calls in a magazine, which was an unofficial mouthpiece of German propaganda, somewhat reflected the discussions about forming armed Polish units that were once again taking place in Berlin at the time. Unfortunately, little is known about this. It is also difficult to say who initiated it, as both the Wehrmacht and the SS were interested. In any case, on May 19, 1944, the “*fundamental prohibition*” against drafting Poles into the *Wehrmacht* was reiterated. Only the *SS-Reichsführer* [Himmler] was given the authority to form his own Polish units from “*particularly suitable individuals*.” But as early as May 21, 1944, Hitler finally decided that among the former citizens of Poland, only Ukrainians and Belarusians could be incorporated into the auxiliary units of the Wehrmacht.⁴³



FIGURE 7. Wiktor Gruszczyk's military booklet *Waffen-SS*. Wiktor Gruszczyk was conscripted into the *Waffen-SS* at the end of November 1944. Source: <http://legionorlabialego.com/zdjecia> (accessed June 11, 2024).

However, this decision did not stand in the way of a change in the tone of propaganda, which called on the Poles to cooperate, if not at the front, then at least at work. Everyone was urged to actively participate in fortification work. At the end of May, a poster appeared in Krakow using an entirely new rhetoric: “*Citizens!*

*Help defend your country with your work! [...] The German Wehrmacht calls on you to assist the army in your country. [...] The German soldier defends your country with a weapon in hand! You, on the other hand, should contribute to the defense of your homeland with your work!”*⁴⁴ At the beginning of June, an appeal under the headline “*To arms – to shovels. Everyone to fight and work against the common enemy*” was posted in Lviv.⁴⁵ Men between the ages of 16 and 35 were to be drafted. While Ukrainians were to join the army, the plan was to utilize Poles for fortification work.



FIGURE 8. *A family photo of a soldier from Chorzów serving in the Waffen-SS with the rank of SS-Schütze.ⁱⁱ Source: <http://legionorlabialego.com/zdjecia> (accessed June 11, 2024).*

Eventually, the idea that Poles should fight not only with shovels but also with weapons in hand resurfaced. Just as Katyn provided a pretext for this propaganda in the spring of 1943, the Warsaw Uprising in the autumn of 1944 prompted a final attempt to win over the Poles after its defeat. It should be emphasized that this attempt had no chance of success, as it lacked any perspective for Polish interests and, more crucially, had no prospect of acceptance within Polish society. The Polish populace was neither convinced by the proposal to cede some lower administrative positions to Poles nor by the rumors that the *Rada Główna Opiekuńcza* (Central Welfare Council) would be transformed into a “*Polish National Committee*.”⁴⁶ Romanticizing the bravery of the insurgents and portraying

their fight as an expression of anti-communism had little effect. German propaganda suggested – supported by propaganda from the other side of the front – that some AK units had already taken up the fight on the side of the Germans.⁴⁷ Attempts were also made to exploit the widespread aversion towards the underground that existed at the end of 1944 and the beginning of 1945 by blaming it for the failed uprising, the destruction of the city, the displacement of the people, and the thousands of victims.

It is worthwhile to quote extensively from the report of Ludwig Fischer, the Governor of the Warsaw District, which was written on December 20, 1944, but reflects the situation several months earlier:

The Warsaw Uprising has once again demonstrated that the vast majority of the Polish nation is against Bolshevism. It is now equally obvious that the Poles feel betrayed by England and no longer believe in its promises. In this situation, the Poles feel completely abandoned, and therefore many of them are beginning to understand that there is currently only one power in Europe on which the Polish nation relies – the German Reich. [...] We Germans should cleverly exploit this sentiment of the Polish population. It is not necessary to make any promises of a legal nature to the Poles, although the fact that more Poles are now being employed in the lower ranks of administration undoubtedly makes a good impression. However, such measures are not of decisive importance.

More importantly, German statements in the Reich should cease once and for all the constant slander of the Polish population, which consists of the [social] ranking: “*Jews, Poles, Gypsies*.” The decent part of the Polish population rightly felt such equating with Jews and Gypsies as defamation and demeaning insult. If the Reich could visibly change direction in this regard, it would have a very positive effect on the mood.

Furthermore, in recognition of the attitude of the Polish nation, arbitrariness should be curbed, which unfortunately has been a frequent phenomenon in the last five years.⁴⁸

It is difficult to say who broke Hitler’s resistance to the creation of Polish armed units in the autumn of 1944. It may have been due to the efforts of Hans Frank, who wanted to exploit the fifth anniversary of the establishment of the G.G. (on 26 October) for propaganda purposes. He probably found support in some circles

within the military. The Army High Command submitted a corresponding request to Hitler on October 23, 1944, and the next day received the *Führer's* permission to deploy Poles in the *HiWi* (*Hilfswillige*) units of the *Wehrmacht* based on the provisions of April 29, 1944, which applied to other units in the East.⁴⁹ Frank was immediately informed of this, and he “*especially welcomed this news, as it completely aligned with his direction.*”⁵⁰

The guidelines for recruitment were gradually refined. On 24 April, it was only decided that Polish volunteers would wear German uniforms, with an armband bearing the inscription: “*In the service of the German Wehrmacht.*”⁵¹ Four days later, it was added that the volunteers should initially be committed for four months, as a commitment “*until the end of the war*” was viewed as a possibly deterrent. However, these concerns were dropped on 31 October.⁵²

The information was initially kept secret. Nevertheless, even before the official announcement of recruitment, a corresponding poster was prepared in a Krakow printing house, depicting “*a Polish worker laying down his shovel while a German soldier hands him a rifle. It was announced that the Poles, due to their ‘massive, voluntary’ efforts in digging trenches against the Soviets, deserved to fight with weapons in hand against the enemy from the East.*”⁵³ The posters explained the rights of the volunteers and listed the addresses of the recruitment offices. Rumors of the impending conscription spread through the city, causing some panic. Konstanty Tchórznicki, the chairman of the Central Welfare Council, intervened on 2 and 3 November with the “government” of the G.G., stating that the announcement of conscription “*in the current situation would be considered a highly apolitical step, which could have serious and harmful consequences.*”⁵⁴ He was informed that it was only about recruitment for auxiliary formations, which should not be compared to the *SS Galicia*, but at most, if one wanted to compare, had similarities with the *Organisation Todt*. It was categorically stated that this was not the beginning of a general conscription. The Polish representative was confidentially informed that the *Wehrmacht* did not attach much importance to Frank’s initiative and did not expect it to succeed.⁵⁵

Despite such explanations, the military devoted much attention to the initiative, which operated under the code name “*White Eagle*,” and made efforts to appropriately embed said initiative in propaganda. On November 4, 1944, Army Group Center published guidelines for the recruitment of Poles. The units were initially supposed to include 12,000 volunteers and be assigned first to the second, fourth, and ninth armies. The strict voluntariness of the matter was emphasized.

The use of the derogatory term “*HiWi*” was strictly prohibited, as they wanted to convince the Poles that they would be treated like “*real*” *Wehrmacht* soldiers. Any contact with Ukrainian or Russian units and the holding of political discussions with the volunteers were also prohibited. Only the following opinion was to be represented to them: “*The German Wehrmacht is fighting a determined battle to the end to protect Europe against Bolshevism. Every honest helper in this unconditional fight is welcome as a comrade by the Wehrmacht.*”⁵⁶ Concerned about the success of the recruitment, recommendations included everyone between the ages of 16 and 50, provided they passed the medical commission. The recruits were to be informed that they could commit for at least four months or until the end of the war. Only the latter were to take the oath: “*I swear by God this sacred oath, that in the fight for the future of Europe, in the ranks of the German Wehrmacht, I will render unconditional obedience to the Supreme Commander of the German Wehrmacht, Adolf Hitler, and as a brave soldier I am ready to lay down my life at any time for this oath.*”⁵⁷ The Poles were to be dressed and equipped in a *Wehrmacht*-typical manner, provided – as noted – such equipment was available. The arming of the units was planned only after two trial months and was subject to strict controls.⁵⁸ The candidates were promised the same rights as German soldiers: the same food, the opportunity to buy at lower prices, medical care, and pastoral care within the framework of free religious practice. In the event of injury or death, they were guaranteed insurance. Widows and orphans were to receive regular payments, and parents a one-time support. The pay was acceptable—90 zł for the ordinary soldier, 108 zł for a corporal, and 150-210 zł for a platoon leader. Higher ranks were not intended for Poles.⁵⁹

Both the posters⁶⁰ and the newspapers (e.g., *Goniec Krakowski* from November 17 and 19-20, 1944) only mentioned recruitment “*for Polish auxiliary forces with the German armed forces.*” Shortly after the first announcement appeared, a group of 30 men **and 15 women** was filmed marching through the streets of Krakow in German uniforms and singing Polish military songs. [*emphasis added*]⁶¹ Recruitment offices were opened in Krakow and then in other cities and towns of the G.G., which were sometimes decorated, like in Włoszczowa, with green branches, white-red flags, and Polish eagles. The use of Polish national symbols, which – as previously mentioned – also influenced the name of the enterprise, was intended to persuade the Poles. In the recruitment offices, there was even talk about the formation of a “*White Eagle Division.*” An observer of the events at that time writes:



FIGURE 9. *Jan Rutkiewicz – 3 SS Totenkopf.* Source: <http://legionorlabialego.com/zdjecia> (accessed June 11, 2024).

It must have been in the first decade of November 1944, while we were digging trenches near a [due to relocation] abandoned rectory [in Brzeźnica on the Vistula - JK], when around noon the soldiers guarding us said we should stop working and took us to the nearby building of the former municipal office. Someone [presumably from the unit's leadership] began agitating the approximately hundred men who were crowded together in a fairly large room. He repeatedly concluded with the call 'join the White Eagle Division' and then offered the recruits cigarettes of the 'junak' brand. [probably referring to the 'Juno' brand cigarettes - JK]⁶²



Anecdote: “After the attack on the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941, I lost all contact with my family. Taken by the Gestapo, I ended up in some women's camp, where I was the only child. I don't know where this camp was, but I remember spending the winter there. I don't know how I managed to gain my freedom. I was 7 years old by then and tried to find my parents' home on my own. I wandered along the railway tracks, in the direction indicated by random people. And then, at some station, I came across this train filled with soldiers in German uniforms. Someone called me in Polish, and they simply took me with them as a mascot. An incredible, very cosmopolitan battalion 202, composed of forcibly conscripted non-Germans into the German army, so-called young volunteers, whose families were hostages in case of desertion. The commanders and officers were Germans. I was with them for 2 years, I have 2 photos from that time, the mascot of battalion 202 in a German uniform and of course without a weapon. I traveled with them from Ukraine, through Poland, Germany, all the way to Alsace [...] in 1945 I was handed over to a Pole who had long lived in Germany. I was 9-10 years old then. And that's all. And one more thing. From childhood, very deep scars remained on my body. My real parents, if they are found, can point out their distribution.” Source: <http://legionorlabialego.com/202-batalion> (accessed June 11, 2024).

Given the catastrophic food supply at the time, the guarantee of good provision played a notable role for potential volunteers. Volunteering with the prospect of being sent into combat at an unspecified future date also meant a chance to escape the labor company, the camp, or prison.⁶³ This is also confirmed by the assessments of the delegation of the London exile government, which closely observed the

recruitment attempts. “*The recruitment for this auxiliary service is laborious and yields only minimal success,*” says one report.

They were largely achieved only in camps and prisons. The Germans brought a group of 50 young men, allegedly ‘volunteers,’ to Krakow for propaganda purposes. These people come from Warsaw, were in the Pruszków and Auschwitz camps, from where they were sent to a camp near Wrocław. There, they were forced into ‘voluntary’ service in the German army. News from the provinces reports that in many cases the local occupation authorities are forcing people to volunteer, while elsewhere it is being spread that a German-Polish understanding has been reached, and that members of the AK [*Armia Krajowa* – Home Army] have been ordered to join the ranks of the new German formation against the Bolsheviks.⁶⁴

By early December 1944, according to the delegation in the G.G., 471 volunteers were recruited. They mainly relied on the aforementioned prisoners. In Krakow, volunteers were to be numbered starting from 5,000; the slots before that were reserved for the “*volunteers*” from the camps. In the prisons in Piotrków and Krakow, there were attempts to persuade female prisoners to join the women’s auxiliary service, but with little success.⁶⁵ Recruitment continued with similar results until the end of the occupation. Potential volunteers were also deterred by the increasingly brutal recruitment methods—raids were organized in Radom, for example, and those who refused to “*volunteer*” for German service were sent to work on trench construction. The treatment of recruits often did not match the promises made beforehand. For instance, a company of 170 men from the barracks on Zwirzyniecka Street in Krakow received Slovak uniforms, and the introduction of ruthless drilling and German command quickly led to desertions.⁶⁶

The meager results led to an attempt to recruit youth, who were to be employed in operating anti-aircraft guns and in radio communication. From a small group in Warsaw, it was reportedly possible to form the so-called *Polski Hufiec Lotniczy* (Polish Air Squadron). Even in this case, the recruitment was cloaked in “*patriotic*” terms: boys aged 15 to 20 were to receive armbands with hussar wings, a magazine was created for them—*Do czynu* (To Action)—and the campaign was to be conducted under the slogan: “*The Polish youth wants to correct the mistakes of their fathers and give Poland a chance to develop.*”⁶⁷ There were also attempts to extend recruitment to the areas incorporated into the Reich. However, this was decisively rejected by Berlin, where it was considered that the Poles were more important as workers than as soldiers.⁶⁸ The Polish formations were not sent into

battle—the winter offensive had begun too quickly. Besides, the “volunteers” had not yet received weapons. The last attempt to send the Poles into battle was made in March 1945 by Władysław Studnicki, who appealed to Himmler to release the Poles from the remaining camps and send some of them to the front.⁶⁹

The fact that the Poles avoided armed collaboration during World War II should not obscure the attempts that were made in this direction. An alternative history would include the answer to the question of whether enough volunteers would have been found to form a unit if the Germans had been less stubborn in the summer of 1941 or the late spring of 1943 and had offered the Poles the same conditions as, for example, at the end of 1944. For a corresponding propagandistic exploitation, the units would not have had to be particularly numerous or militarily significant. Skilled propaganda knows how to turn a small skirmish by a small troop into a decisive victory.

This work is, as noted in the title, merely a sketch on the topic and written based on rather superficial source research. However, it shows how little we still know about the political, military, or social history of Poland during the years of World War II and how many difficult tasks still await its historians.

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1. I addressed the problem in the article: “Wyrwy w szeregu. Polacy do Wehrmachtu, czyli pomysły na kolaborację” in the magazine *Polityka*, No. 7, February 17, 2001.
 2. Tilkovszky, L.: “Hungary and German ,*Volksgruppenpolitik*‘ 1938-1945.” Cologne-Vienna, 1981, pp. 317-320; also see: ders.: “The Recruitment Campaign of the Waffen-SS in Hungary,” in: *Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, Vol. 20, 1974, pp. 127-181.
 3. *Documentation of the Expulsion from East-Central Europe*, edited by Th. Schieder, Vol. V, *The Fate of the Germans in Yugoslavia*. Bonn, 1961, p. 72E.
 4. There is already extensive literature on the issue of “foreigners” in the German army. See, among others: Madajczyk, Cz.: “Faszyzm i okupacje. Wykonywanie okupacji przez państwa Osi w Europie,” Vol. II: “Mechanizmy realizowania okupacji.” Poznań, 1984; Neulen, H.W.: „*An deutscher Seite. Internationale Freiwillige von Wehrmacht und Waffen-SS.*“ München, 1985; Caballero Jurado, C.: “*Foreign Volunteers of the*

Wehrmacht 1941-1945.” London, 1983; Gosztony, P.: “*Hitlers Fremde Heere. Das Schicksal der nichtdeutschen Armeen im Ostfeldzug.*” Düsseldorf-Wien, 1976; Littlejohn, D.: “*The Patriotic Traitors. A History of Collaboration in German Occupied Europe 1940-1945.*” London, 1972; also see: Littlejohn, D.: “*Foreign Legions of the Third Reich,*” Vol. 1: “*Norway, Denmark, France.*” San Jose, 1979, Vol. 2: “*Belgium, Great Britain, Holland, Italy and Spain.*” San Jose, 1981.

5. Neulen, H.W.: “*An deutscher Seite...*,” p. 42.

6. Ibid., pp. 148, 382.

7. It is noteworthy that in 1985, when asked which nation had particularly distinguished itself during the war, Belgians ranked Poles first and the British second. Szarota, T.: “Zaprzaniec, renegat, zdrajca,” in: *Polityka*, No. 5, January 30, 1999.

8. For information on Studnicki’s political views, see Suleja, W.: “*System polityczny Władysława Studnickiego (do roku 1918),*” in: *Polska myśl polityczna w XIX i XX wieku*, ed. H. Zieliński, Vol. 2: “*Twórcy polskiej myśli politycznej. Zbiór studiów.*” Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków-Gdańsk, 1978, pp. 135-178; Studnicki, W.: “*Irrwege in Polen. Ein Kampf um die polnisch-deutsche Annäherung.*” Göttingen, 1951, pp. 1-27.

9. Studnicki, W.: “*Irrwege...*,” p. 35. Polish version: “*Tragiczne manowce. Próby przeciwdziałania katastrofom narodowym 1939-1945.*” Gdańsk, 1995.

10. Studnicki, W.: “*Irrwege...*,” p. 37

11. Ibid., pp. 110-115.

12. Ibid., p. 57.

13. Landau, L.: “*Kronika lat wojny i okupacji,*” Vol. 1: “*wrzesień 1939-listopad 1940,*” ed. by Z. Landau, J. Tomaszewski. Warszawa, 1962, pp. 162-163.

14. Ibid., p. 350.

15. Ibid., p. 571.
16. Ibid.
17. Rembek, S.: *"Dziennik okupacyjny."* Warszawa, 2000, p. 88.
18. Ibid., pp. 88-89.
19. Ibid., p. 89.
20. Koźliński, Z.: *"Moja Czarnowszczyzna,"* in: *Europa NIEprowincjonalna. Przemiany na ziemiach wschodnich dawnej Rzeczypospolitej (Białoruś, Litwa, Łotwa, Ukraina, wschodnie pogranicze III Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej)* w latach 1772-1999, ed. K. Jasiewicz. Warszawa, 1999, pp. 153-154. See also: Wrzeński, W.: *"Postawy i nastroje Polaków po klęsce wrześniowej na terenie okupacji sowieckiej,"* in: *Komunizm. Ideologia, system, ludzie*, ed. T. Szarota. Warszawa, 2001, p. 39.
21. Michalski, Cz.: *"Wojna warszawsko-niemiecka. Pamiętnik wawerczyka."* Warszawa, 1971, p. 144.
22. For information on the propagandistic exploitation of Katyn, see: Król, E.C.: *"Propaganda i indoktrynacja narodowego socjalizmu w Niemczech 1919-1945. Studium organizacji, treści, metod i technik masowego oddziaływania."* Warszawa, 1999, pp. 556-561.
23. Landau, L.: *"Kronika...,*" Vol. II, *"grudzień 1942-czerwiec 1943."* Warszawa, 1962, pp. 457-458.
24. Ibid., p. 454.
25. Quoted from: Borodziej: *"Terror i polityka. Policja niemiecka a polski ruch oporu w GG 1939-1944."* Warszawa, 1985, pp. 69-70.
26. See Borodziej, op.cit., pp. 71-73. There is also a bibliography on the topic provided there.
27. Memorandum of the *"Vereinigten Polnischen Militär-Organisationen*

der Bewegung Miecz i Plug” (“*Sword and Plow Movement*”). - Archiwum Akt Nowych (AAN), Niemieckie władze okupacyjne, Sign. 214/I-5, k. 27-31. Also, see the investigation files in the case of “*Miecz i Plug*” from the late forties, early fifties - AAN, Kolekcja dokumentów dotyczących ruchu robotniczego i jego działaczy, zgromadzona przez Centralną Komisję Kontroli Partyjnej PZPR w Warszawie, Sign. 509/3-5. In the file 509/3, there are statements from Bogusław Hryniewicz (about the agreement with the Gestapo and the preparation of the memorandum, k. 10-18). The German and Polish text of the memorandum - 509/5, k. 125-133.

28. AAN, 214/I-5, k. 6-7.

29. Borodziej, op.cit., pp. 75, 192.

30. Broszat, M.: “*Zweihundert Jahre deutsche Polenpolitik.*” Frankfurt, 1972, p. 304.

31. Ibid., p. 305.

32. Landau, L.: “*Kronika...*,” Vol. III, “*Juli 1943-Februar 1944.*” Warszawa, 1963, p. 74.

33. Ibid., p. 256.

34. The propagandistic exploitation of Polish deserters had already been a tradition for several years. As early as July 13, 1942, the High Command of the *Wehrmacht* adopted special guidelines for the treatment of Polish soldiers fighting in Africa. According to the order issued by Keitel, Chief of the OKW, on February 11, 1944, Polish soldiers who fell into captivity while wearing American, British, or Polish uniforms were guaranteed “*unrestricted right of return to their homeland.*” However, it was not until June 30, 1944, that this order was extended to Polish soldiers fighting on the Soviet side. Military Archive - *Bundesarchiv (MA-BA)*, *Freiburg im Breisgau, OKW/WFSt/Qu: Generalgouvernement - allgem. Oktober 1943 - Januar 1945*, RW/v.731, k.15. The “*Berling soldiers*” were used for German propaganda until at least the end of 1944. For example, in September 1944, in Radom, “*people in Polish uniforms were employed in the kitchens for Polish forced laborers. Naturally, they*

attracted great interest. When asked, they gladly talked about their painful experiences and adventures in the former Soviet Union.”

Kusowski, Tadeusz: “Byłem werbowany...,” Letter to the Editor of *Polityka* dated February 22, 2001.

35. Król: *Propaganda...*, p. 563

36. Landau: *Kronika...*, Vol. III, p. 437

37. Ibid., p. 566

38. *Occupation and Resistance in the Diary of Hans Frank 1939-1945*, Ed. S. Płoski, Vol. II. Warszawa, 1970, p. 396. The history of the Polish Legions from the years of World War I served Hitler as a lesson and a negative experience, to which he not only referred on this occasion but also when it came to enlarging General Vlasov’s army. - Szarota, T.: “Hitler o Piłsudskim oraz okupant wobec Marszałka,” in: *Gdańsk-Gdynia-Europa-Stany Zjednoczone w XIX i XX wieku*. Księga pamiątkowa dedykowana profesor Annie Cienciale, Ed. by M. Andrzejewski. Gdańsk, 2000, pp. 247-248.

39. *Occupation and Resistance...*, op.cit.

40. AAN, Delegatura Rządu na Kraj (further DRnK), 202/III/24, k. 6.

41. Zakrzewski, A.: “Wincenty Witos, chłopski polityk i mąż stanu.” Warszawa, 1977, pp. 392-393.

42. Madajczyk: *Faszyzm...*, Vol. II, p. 331.

43. MA-BA, OKW/WFSt/Qu: Generalgouvernement - allgemein. Oktober 1945, RW 4/v.731, k. 13-14

44. AAN, DRnK, 202/III-25, k.14.

45. Ibid., k. 35.

46. See Król, op.cit., p. 572; Borodziej, op.cit. p. 149.

47. In a leaflet intended for soldiers of the Polish Army, it stated: *“Here speaks one of you who has defected to the German side. [...] Comrades, do the same as I and others! Join the German side. The units of the AK, which marched out of Warsaw with weapons in hand on 4 October, can testify before history to the chivalrous conduct of the Germans. [...] If the situation does not allow you to cross the front line, try to join a partisan unit of the AK fighting behind the Bolshevik front line.”* - AAN, 214/XII-2, p. 44a.

48. *Reports of Ludwig Fischer, Governor of the Warsaw District 1939-1944.* Warszawa, 1987, pp. 841-842.

49. MA-BA, OKW/WFSt/Qu: Generalgouvernement - allgemein. Oktober 1943 - Januar 1945, RW 4/v.731, k. 25.

50. *The Service Diary of the German General Governor in Poland 1939-1945*, ed. By W. Präg, W. Jacobmeyer. Stuttgart, 1975, p. 920.

51. MA-BA, OKW/WFSt/Qu: Generalgouvernement - allgemein. Oktober 1943 - Januar 1945, RW 4/v. 731, k. 25.

52. Ibid., k. 31-32.

53. AAN, DRnK 202/III,-26, k. 8, Report from GG 1.X.-20.XII. 1944.

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid.

56. MA-BA, RH 53-13/140, Foreign Soldiers, k. 43v. Characteristic is the rhetoric of a leaflet primarily directed at soldiers of the Polish Army: *“The hour of your liberation is also approaching. You thought your liberation had come when the Bolsheviks marched into your cities. But now you have seen the true face of the Jewish system of unfreedom. [...] You have also understood that you Poles are Europeans. The proud Polish eagle with the crown must never become a victim of the Asiatic vulture. Our European neighborhood obliges us to a joint fight against Bolshevism, which only brings hunger and misery to your women and*

children. Forget everything that has been between us, as we have forgotten it. Think of the friendship of our leaders, Piłsudski and Hitler.”
- AAN, Niemieckie władze okupacyjne, 214/XII-2, k. 70.

57. MA-BA, OKW/WFSt/Qu: Generalgouvernement - allgemein.
Oktober 1943 - Januar 1945, RW 4/v.731, k. 48.

58. MA-BA, RH 53-13/140, Foreign Soldiers, k. 43 - 44.

59. Ibid., k. 45, AAN, Niemieckie władze wojskowe, 214/XIII-1, k. 9.

60. According to a dispatch from the Commander of the AK for the Krakow region, the announcement was posted in Krakow on 16 November. *“I expect larger raids,”* wrote Przemysław Nakoniecznikoff-Klukowski. *“I have issued instructions to avoid arrests, hinderances to dispatches to the Reich, and in case of repressions against the population.”* - *Armia Krajowa w dokumentach 1939-1945, Vol. V, październik 1944 - lipiec 1945*. Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków, 1991, p. 143.

61. Wroński, T.: *“Kronika okupowanego Krakowa.”* Kraków, 1974, p. 377.

62. Kusowski, T., op.cit.

63. Tadeusz Kusowski writes: *“The recruiters acted skillfully by emphasizing the guaranteed good food, which had an effect on the people plagued by resettlement and hunger. The success was 10 volunteers. We were shielded by them and returned to the interrupted work. The voluntary recruits were transported by the Germans to Garbatka, seven kilometers away. There, they were fed according to the norms for soldiers and quartered in a school building. I believe that already on the first night, a fire broke out in the school, and the newly recruited volunteers, who had not even been uniformed yet, scattered to their families.”* Ibid.

64. AAN, DRnK 202/III-26, k. 8-9.

65. Ibid., k. 9. According to the Delegation of the Government, it was precisely the meager results of the *“voluntary”* recruitment that deterred

the German military authorities from mass recruitment. Allegedly, in a Krakow printing house, 300,000 forms were already prepared, *“to be sent individually to the conscripts.”* - Ibid., k. 9. The civil authorities were somewhat more optimistic: *“The party leadership and the ‘government’ of the G.G. assume that the propaganda for voluntary entry into the auxiliary troops was insufficient and responsible for the failure of the action. In view of this, another attempt should be made.”* - Ibid.

66. Ibid., k. 23. Situation report for the period from December 21, 1944, to January 21, 1945. It is noteworthy that the decision of the Chamber of the Supreme Court on May 25, 1948, stated that only the voluntary entry of a Polish citizen *“into the voluntary Polish Army Corps with the German Army constitutes a crime in terms of affiliation with an enemy army.”* - Kochański, A.: *“Polska 1944-1991. Informator historyczny, Vol. I, Podział administracyjny. Ważniejsze akty prawne, decyzje i enuncjacje państwowe (1944-1956).”* Warszawa, 1996, p. 237.

67. AAN, DRnK 202/III-26, k.10. There was also propaganda among the soldiers of the Polish Army suggesting that Polish units were already engaged in combat. Among other things, a call was published *“by Polish volunteers fighting on the side of the German armed forces against Bolshevism!”* signed by *“officers and Polish soldiers of the voluntary Polish anti-Bolshevik units within the German armed forces.”* It stated, among other things: *“Polish brothers! When we Poles support the German army in the fight against Asiatic Bolshevism, we do not do it out of sympathy for the Germans. We are only deeply convinced that Soviet Russia is Poland’s greatest enemy, which must be defeated so that the fatherland can rise again. [...] Brothers! We have asked the German High Command to leave us those sections of the front where you are forced to fight for Bolshevism and against the interests of Poland. [...] Brothers, we call on you – if the opportunity arises, join us to fight against Bolshevism as free Polish soldiers.”* - AAN, Niemieckie władze okupacyjne, 214/XII-2, k. 61-61a. It is difficult to say what the effect of these calls was, but the propaganda department of the Red Army released a special leaflet on December 15, 1944: *“Not a single Pole to the army of the German occupiers!”* - Ibid., 214/XII-5, k. 78-78a.

68. MA-BA, OKW/WFSt/Qu: Generalgouvernement - allgem. Oktober 1943 - Januar 1945, RW 4/v.731, k. 40,43. A former resident of Šrem in

Wielkopolska remembers: *“Towards the end of the war, there were only a few of us Poles left in Šrem. We kept discussing whether a Pole who jokingly volunteered for the Wehrmacht would have a chance of being accepted. But we always came to the conclusion that he wouldn’t be taken. The Germans weren’t as stupid as they’re portrayed in Polish movies. They could do the math. The Poles were good workers for them. They needed such people. If they had drafted a good worker into the army, then they would have had to replace him – but with whom?”* – Bohdan Šmigelski in a letter to the author dated March 28, 2001.

69. Cz. Madajczyk, op.cit., p.331

ⁱ Kochanowski, Jerzy. “Polacy do Wehrmachtu? Propozycje i dyskusje 1939-1945. Zarys problemu.” Translated by Weronika Kuzniar. *Przegląd Historyczny* 93/3 (2002): 307-320. chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://bazhum.muzhp.pl/media/files/Przegląd_Historyczny/Przegląd_Historyczny-r2002-t93-n3/Przegląd_Historyczny-r2002-t93-n3-s307-320/Przegląd_Historyczny-r2002-t93-n3-s307-320.pdf (accessed 6/8/2024).

ⁱⁱ The rank of *SS-Schütze* indicates the rank of infantry soldier in the *Waffen-SS*, equivalent to a rifleman. This is one of the lower ranks in the *Waffen-SS* military hierarchy. So, the person in the photo was an infantry soldier in this organization.

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