

**THE WAR DIARY
OF THE SUPREME COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF
POLISH ARMED FORCES,
GENERAL WŁADYSŁAW SIKORSKI.
VOL. II: AUGUST 1940–JULY 1941**

The second volume of General Sikorski's War Diary as Supreme Commander-in-Chief covers the period from 1st August 1940 to 31 July 1941. This was a period full of important events, the most important of which was probably the German attack against the USSR on 22 June 1941. As far as the prosecution of the war was concerned, of no less importance were the Yugoslav and Greek campaigns, as well as the operations in North Africa and on the Atlantic Ocean. During these momentous times the government of General Sikorski and the Armed Forces under his leadership, continued to carry out the main tenet of Poland's policy – the liberation of its citizens from under German and Soviet occupation and the liberation of the Polish Republic's territory. The key to achieving this remained the alliance with Great Britain. This in practical terms meant maintaining active military support for the Allied cause through the active participation in operations of Polish soldiers, seamen and airmen.

Following the evacuation of the Polish authorities and military personnel from France to Great Britain in June 1940 both, especially the armed forces underwent a wholesale re-organisation to adapt to British conditions. The Supreme Commander-in-Chief initiated a fundamental re-organisation of the three services. His, as it turned out, unfounded belief in France's ability and desire to defend herself resulted in a somewhat tardy decision to evacuate to Britain. The result was that only some 30% i.e. 20,000 troops were brought out to Britain, the majority being various command staffs. Because of the dispositions of the other services, the majority of naval and air force personnel were rescued. In all in July 1940 some 37% of the Polish Armed Forces as of June 1940 were available to continue the struggle from Britain¹.

On 5th August 1940 the prime ministers and foreign ministers of Poland and United Kingdom signed the Anglo-Polish Military Agreement which regulated the legal framework for the existence and functioning of the Polish Armed Forces on British soil. Already in July the 1st Rifle Brigade was formed under Major-General Gustaw Paszkiewicz as well as the 2nd Rifle Brigade (redesignated 10th Armoured Cavalry Brigade in November 1940) under

¹ A. Liebich, *Na obcej ziemi. Polskie Siły Zbrojne 1939–1945 (On foreign soil. The Polish Armed Forces 1939–1945)*, London 1947, p. 24–25; W. Biegański, *Polskie Siły Zbrojne na Zachodzie 1939–1945 (The Polish Armed Forces in the West 1939–1945)*, Warsaw 1990, p. 98.

Major-General Rudolf Dreszer. In August 1940 the 3rd Cadre Rifle Brigade was formed under Major-General Władysław Langner who was replaced in July 1941 by Colonel Romuald Wolikowski. The Canadian Brigade formed in late July, renamed 4th Cadre Rifle Brigade, was commanded by Colonel Stanisław Sosabowski, whilst the 5th Cadre Rifle Brigade was commanded successively by Colonel Józef Giza, Major-General Rudolf Dreszer and Colonel Kazimierz Dworak. Moreover an Armoured Forces Group was formed under Lieutenant-Colonel Antoni Korczyński, soon replaced by Colonel Tadeusz Majewski. On 28 September 1940 General Sikorski issued an order forming from these troops the Polish I Corps in Scotland, whose command was given to Lieutenant-General Marian Kukiel. In October of that year Polish forces took over the defence of a part of the eastern Scottish coast, stretching 200 kilometres from the Firth of Forth to Montrose. In June 1941 the I Corps totalled some 18,000 troops². In November 1940 the 7th Cadre Rifle Brigade was formed under Colonel Adam Bogoria-Zakrzewski.

The Polish Air Force played an important part in securing victory during the Battle of Britain (July–October 1940, though the air war over Britain continued until June 1941)³.

The importance that General Sikorski attached to the formation of successive units in Britain is evidenced by his frequent tours of inspection. Though the Polish high command was located in London, Sikorski regularly stayed in Scotland visiting his troops. All these trips have been noted down in the war diary, thus the reader can see for himself the input of the Commander-in-Chief in the creation of the Polish Forces in the United Kingdom. The prestige of the Polish Army and building up its morale was served through visits paid by senior British political and military representatives. In August 1940 and March 1941 they were visited by King George VI (accompanied on his second visit by Queen Elizabeth). In October 1940 the 1st Rifle Brigade was visited by Prime Minister Winston Churchill who came together with General Sir John Dill the Chief of Imperial General Staff. In December of that year the Secretary of State for Air, Archibald Sinclair, visited Polish squadrons, whilst General Sir Alan Brooke General Officer Commanding-in-Chief Home Forces and Hugh Dalton the Minister of Economic Warfare, inspected the 10th Armoured Cavalry Brigade.

The question of the possibility of raising Polish units in North America was looked into during General Sikorski's visit to Canada and the USA, which lasted from 1 April to 10th May 1941. Apart from military discussions, General Sikorski held several important political discussions including with President Roosevelt, Secretary of State Cordell Hull and the Canadian Prime Minister, William Mackenzie King.

During the period covered by the second volume of General Sikorski's War Diary, the most important international challenge faced by the Polish Prime Minister and Supreme Commander-in-Chief, were the consequences of Germany's attack against the USSR. Churchill's lightening reaction greeting the USSR in the allied camp fighting the III Reich, resulted in the necessity of reviewing Poland's position vis a vis a state which had participated in the aggression against Poland in September 1939, and was now occupying a large part of Poland's territory. Polish-Soviet talks commenced on 5th July 1941. Sikorski, for whom the possibility of expanding the Army through the recruitment of Poles in the USSR was

² W. Biegański, *Polskie...*, p. 38, 42; Z. Wawer, *Polskie Siły Zbrojne na obczyźnie (The Polish Armed Forces in Exile)* [in:] *Wojsko Polskie w II wojnie światowej (The Polish Army during the Second World War)*, ed. E. Kospath-Pawłowski, Warsaw 1994, p. 145–150.

³ More on this see: G. Sojda, G. Śliżewski, P. Hodyra, *Ci cholerni Polacy! Polskie Siły Powietrzne w Bitwie o Anglię (Those bloody Poles! The Polish Air Force in the Battle of England [sic!])*, Warsaw 2016.

of paramount importance, effectively took over the negotiations with the Soviet ambassador in London, Ivan Maisky. Despite the reservations concerning the imprecise wording of the text of the Polish-Soviet Agreement, aired by President Władysław Raczkiewicz, General Kazimierz Sosnkowski, August Zaleski the Foreign Minister and the representatives of the National Party, General Sikorski decided to sign it, on 30th July 1941. This provoked the second political crises to hit the Polish government during the war, one which had serious and manifold consequences⁴.

Another important area of concern for the Polish Government were the attempts to foster closer relations with Czechoslovakia, which it was hoped would lead to a union of the two countries, which in turn would be the basis for a wider union of the countries of Central Europe. The period of greatest activity in this respect was between November 1940 and June 1941. On 11th November 1940 a joint Polish-Czechoslovak Declaration was issued which called for a close political and economic union at the end of the war. In early 1941 a Polish-Czechoslovak Co-ordinating Committee was created along with several sub committees looking at specific areas of co-operation. The effect of their work was a draft „Principles of a Constitutional Law of the Union of Poland and Czechoslovakia”⁵.

The source material for this publication is fundamentally linked to the functioning of one of the most important Polish archival institutions abroad – namely, The Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum in London. The archival grouping forming the War Diary of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief is in some ways at the very fulcrum of the Institute’s collections around which the remaining archival groupings were organised.

The documenting of the activities of public persons is a practice often undertaken. In the case of General Sikorski, the responsibility for keeping such notes was that of the ADC’s office. In the Archives of the Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum there are eleven original diaries, which cover the general’s activities between 30 August 1939 and 24th May 1943. As a number of different adjutants wrote up the entries, the same events were at times written up several times. This allows for the compilation of differing notes concerning the same events, sometimes completely at odds with each other. This necessitates careful confrontation with other sources.

The notes were kept by many persons, moreover, they were later added to and corrected. This resulted in entries for specific dates being written up by several persons. Not all the authors could be identified.

The second volume of the War Diary covers, as far as the original handwritten entries are concerned, file numbers 50–56 of the KOL.1/DCNW archival group. As mentioned before, entries overlap in individual files, some are simply drafts followed by the final version of the same. The editors have decided to publish all the manuscript versions, apart from where they do not differ from each other greatly. File no. 52 has been omitted completely as it does not refer to General Sikorski’s activities but, in all probability, that of his wife, Helena Sikorska.

The list of General Sikorski’s aides-de-camp as Supreme Commander-in-Chief include: Colonel Antoni Jan Boguślawski (he accompanied the general in September 1939 and the

⁴ M. Dymarski, *Stosunki wewnętrzne wśród polskiego uchodźstwa politycznego i wojskowego we Francji i w Wielkiej Brytanii 1939–1945* (Internal relations amongst the Polish political and military exiles in France and Great Britain 1939–1945), Wrocław 1999, p. 143–167; M. Hulas, *Goście czy intruzi? Rząd polski na uchodźstwie wrzesień 1939–lipiec 1943* (Guests or intruders? The Polish Government in Exile September 1939–July 1943), Warsaw 1996, p. 95–112.

⁵ T. Kisielewski, *Federacja środkowoeuropejska. Pertrakcje polsko-czechosłowackie 1939–1943* (Central European Federation. Polish-Czechoslovak negotiations 1939–1943), Warsaw 1991, p. 43, 75–77, 87–88, 90–92, 121, 259–267.

War Diary for this period was based on his notes), Major Zygmunt Borkowski, Captain Hubert Brzozowski, Lieutenant Józef Michałowski, Captain Antoni Kiewnarski PAF, Lieutenant Janusz Tyszkiewicz-Łącki, 2nd Lieutenant Alfred Chłapowski, Captain Stefan Zamoyski, Captain Marian Piotrowski PAF, Lieutenant Józef Ponikiewski PN, Lieutenant Zygmunt Fudakowski, Lieutenant Czesław Głowczyński PAF and Captain Michał Miszke. Moreover, the military historian Major Otton Laskowski was the author of some of the entries.

The afore mentioned manuscript diaries are the main basis for the official War Diary. This edition has also taken into account the final typescript of the War Diary prepared by Mrs. Regina Oppman nee Remiszewska (1905–1980). She was an archivist and historian, a graduate of the University of Warsaw. She worked in the Polish War Archive attached to the Central Military Library, then in the Military Archive and finally the Military Historical Bureau. In September 1939 along with other military archivists and historians she was evacuated to Romania, from where she reached France in early 1940. Initially she worked for the Polish Red Cross before receiving an appointment at Polish General Headquarters. With the fall of France and the evacuation to Britain she was a civilian employee at the Polish General Staff and then with the Administrative Bureau of the Ministry of National Defence. She subsequently was appointed head of the Special Section of the Museum and Archive Service of the Polish Armed Forces. Her task was to prepare the final and complete version of General Sikorski's War Diary. As Andrzej Suchcitz wrote, this work was *to become the work of her life. In 47 monthly files she created the skeleton for all of General Sikorski's biographers and those interested in Poland's wartime role. For many historians the War Diary became and remains the starting point for further archival research*⁶. From 1948 together with her husband, Dr Edmund Oppman she helped organise the Archives of the General Sikorski Historical Institute (from 1964 The Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum). Following the untimely death of her husband in 1951 she took over as Keeper of Archives remaining in the post until her death in 1980.

Regina Oppman's work takes the form of a typescript, held in the Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum as part of the General Sikorski Collection. It is held under the reference numbers KOL. 1/DCNW/ files 2–48. It should be noted that this was the first attempt to make the war diary available to a wider circle of researchers. The editors of this edition regard themselves as continuing Regina Oppman's work and expanding her aim in accessing this unique source, albeit in a somewhat different form. Her work, based on the entries made by General Sikorski's aides-de-camp led to the creation of a wider more detailed text. Moreover, some elements including those at crucial moments such as the last weeks of the General's life, are available only as a result of Mrs. Oppman's own research.

Regina Oppman is the author of an interesting editorial concept of the war diary. With certain modifications this is the basis for the present edition. The main aim of this edition is to:

a) reproduce in the smallest details the activities of General Sikorski in the years 1939–1943, thus providing an essential source to the history of Poland in this period. At the same time, it will be a base for further studies about Poland's contribution during the Second World War.

⁶ A. Suchcitz, *Regina Oppmanowa – pierwsza dama polskiej archiwistyki na obczyźnie (Regina Oppman – the first lady of the Polish archival service abroad)*, „Tydzień Polski” (Polish Weekly), 23 October 2004, p. 10.

b) to document actual facts by correcting any mistakes and inconsistencies in the entries made by the General's aides-de-camp. Not all the entries were made contemporaneously. At times events were recreated later on in accordance with what individuals remembered or later written testimonies.

c) Filling in the gaps of erstwhile entries as a result of an analysis of additional archival material consulted.

d) Expanding the enclosures to the calendar so as to give as complete a picture as possible of General Sikorski's activities as Supreme Commander-in-Chief and Prime Minister, both from the view of internal Polish politics as well as international politics.

This volume covers the period 1st August 1940 to 31 July 1941, the diaries for which are held in twelve files, numbered KOL.1/DCNW, files 13–24.

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(Translated by *Andrzej Suchcitz*)