

# THE WAR DIARY OF THE SUPREME COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF POLISH ARMED FORCES, GENERAL WŁADYSŁAW SIKORSKI. VOL. III: AUGUST 1941–JULY 1942

The third volume of the War Diary of the Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Armed Forces and Prime Minister of Poland, General Władysław Sikorski, cover a period rich in both political and military issues. The previous volume closed on the day following the signing of the Polish-Soviet Agreement known as the Sikorski-Maisky Agreement. In this volume the reader can follow the consequences of that agreement. It's signing lay at the foundations of a serious political crisis in „Polish London” (the so called crisis of August 1941), leading to fundamental changes both in the government, as well as the National Council and London command of the underground resistance movement in occupied Poland. The German-Soviet conflict had a bearing on Poland's place in the allied camp. As if this were not enough, Japan's attack on the USA in December 1941 resulted in the spreading of the conflict to new continents, engaging for several years millions of soldiers in the Pacific, Australia, Oceania, South-East Asia operational theatres. On the pages of this, third volume of the War Diary we can follow day by day the military struggles and political initiatives concerning the Far Eastern theatre of war. In this tempestuous period Gen. Sikorski's main pre-occupation was the organisational expansion, training and sending into combat soldiers of the Polish Armed Forces. His reasoning was that active participation in combat operations, and the subsequent brotherhood-in-arms with allied soldiers was the best guarantor of the acceptance by the Allied powers of the Polish *raison d'état*.

Between August 1941 and July 1942 the Polish Armed Forces grew dynamically. If in mid 1941 they numbered some 27,500 men (nearly 18,000 in the Polish I Corps, some 8000 Polish Air Force personnel and some 1,500 Polish Naval personnel<sup>1</sup>) then by mid July 1942 this number had risen to 107,888<sup>2</sup> a fourfold increase! This number was made up of over 40,000 soldiers of the Polish Armed Forces in the USSR, over 33,000 soldiers in the Near (at that period called Middle) East and over 18,000 soldiers of the I Corps. Including General Head Quarters, units in Canada, soldiers not on active service in Rothesay Officers Holding Camp

---

<sup>1</sup> PISM, C-in-Cs Secretariat, arch. no. A.XII.1, file 24, pag. p. 6, *ibid.*, file 76, War establishment as on 15 IX 1941, pag. p. 5; *Polskie Siły Zbrojne w Drugiej Wojnie Światowej (The Polish Armed Forces during the Second World War)*, Vol. II, part 2, London 1975, p.467–468; W.Biegański, *Polskie Siły Zbrojne na Zachodzie 1939–1945 (The Polish Armed Forces in the West 1939–1945)*, Warsaw 1990, p.13, 42.

<sup>2</sup> PISM, arch. no. A.XII.1, file 76, Raport on the strength of the armed forces as on 15 VII 1942, pag. p. 52.

this accounted for some 97,097 persons. To this must be added the personnel of the Polish Navy (1837 persons) and the Polish Air Force (9008 persons)<sup>3</sup>.

During the period under consideration, major changes took place in the organisational structure of the I Corps in Scotland which encompassed a large part of the Polish land forces. On 9th October 1941 an order was issued, whereby the 4th Cadre Rifle Brigade was re-named 1 Independent Parachute Brigade under the command of Col. Stanisław Sosabowski. In December of that year the Training Brigade was formed (GOC: Maj-Gen. Janusz Głuchowski) made up of the disbanded 3rd, 5th and 7th Cadre Rifle Brigades. On 25th February 1942 Gen. Sikorski issued the order forming the 1st Armoured Division under Maj-Gen. Stanisław Maczek<sup>4</sup>.

A consequence of the Sikorski-Maisky Agreement was the Polish-Soviet Military Agreement of 14th August 1941. On its basis the formation of the Polish Army in the USSR under Lt-Gen. Władysław Anders was begun. In September 1941 the 5th Infantry Division (GOC: Maj-Gen. Mieczysław Boruta-Spiechowicz) began to be formed followed by the 6th Infantry Division (GOC: Maj-Gen. Michał Tokarzewski-Karaszewicz), and Army Reserve Centre (CO: Col. Janusz Gaładyk and from 10th October Lt. Col. Piotr Kończyc). In December 1941 the formation was begun of the 7th Infantry Division (GOC: Maj-Gen. Zygmunt Bohusz-Szyszkowski), then from 11 March 1942 Col. Janusz Gaładyk, from 27th March Col. Nikodem Sulik and from April 1942 Col. Leopold Okulicki, 8th Infantry Division (GOC: Maj-Gen. Bronisław Rakowski), and the 9th Infantry Division (CO: Col. Marian Bolesławicz). During the winter of 1941/1942 the cadres of the 10th Infantry Division began to be formed (CO: Col. Alfred Schmidt)<sup>5</sup>. The size of the Army in the USSR grew from 26,023 soldiers in September 1941<sup>6</sup> to 61,197 in March 1942<sup>7</sup>. As a result of a dramatic worsening of the living conditions of the Polish soldiers and Polish civilians in the USSR, as well as increasing strained Polish-Soviet diplomatic relations, the evacuation of a part of the Polish Army in the USSR to Iran commenced in March 1942. The evacuation of the remainder took place in August 1942.

General Sikorski's attentive concern for the development of the armed forces comes across very clearly from the pages of his War Diary. Though his administrative base was London, he spent many days in each month among his troops particularly in Scotland. He met soldiers and commanders, observed training exercises, participated in individual regimental and other celebratory days. Apart from the land forces the Commander-in-Chief paid visits to the warships of the Polish Navy (the submarines ORP „Wilk” and ORP „Sokół”, the destroyers ORP „Krakowiak”, ORP „Kujawiak” and ORP „Garland”), as well as Polish Air Force squadrons (302, 316 Fighter Squadrons, 304, 305 Bomber Squadrons, 309 Recce-Fighter Squadron and the 1st Polish Fighter Wing).

On 1st November 1941 Gen. Sikorski flew out via Gibraltar, Malta, Cairo and Alexandria to Tobruk. There on 13th and 14th November, in combat conditions, the C-in-C

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pag. p. 51–52.

<sup>4</sup> *Polskie Siły Zbrojne w drugiej wojnie światowej (The Polish Armed...)*, Vol. II, part 2, p. 121–123; Z. Wawer, *Organizacja Polskich Wojsk Lądowych w Wielkiej Brytanii 1940–1945 (The Organisation of the Polish Land Forces in Great Britain 1940–1945)*, Warsaw 1992, p.70, 77–80, 159; W. Biegański, *Polskie Siły Zbrojne na Zachodzie (The Polish Armed...)*, p.44, 46.

<sup>5</sup> Z. Wawer, *Armia generała Andersa w ZSRR 1941–1942 (General Ander' Army in the USSR 1941–1942)*, Warsaw 2012, p. 345–350, 365–371.

<sup>6</sup> PISM, ref. A.XII.1, file 76, Personnel strength of the armed forces as on 15 IX 1941, p. 5.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., Personnel strength of armed forces as on 15 III 1942, p. 19.

inspected troops of the Independent Carpathian Rifle Brigade under the command of Maj-Gen. Stanisław Kopański. Then via Bagdad, Tehran, Baku and Astrachan he reached Kuybyshev on 30th November, the seat of the Polish Embassy in the USSR. He was in Moscow between 2nd and 5th December holding political talks<sup>8</sup>. He then went on to inspect Polish troops in Buzuluk, Tockoye and Tatishchevo.

Between 21st March and 3rd April 1942 Gen. Sikorski visited Canada and the USA. In the context of his tragic death in Gibraltar fifteen months later, it is worth remembering that during this visit, on 21st March 1942 it is very likely that an assassination attempt on Gen. Sikorski was carried out by Lt-Col. Bogdan Kleczyński PAF, travelling with Sikorski to take up the post of Air Attaché in Washington. Initially Kleczyński who was caught holding a flare in his hand, claimed that he had accidentally found it on board and wanted to dispose of it from the aircraft, when in fact it was he who had brought the flare on board himself<sup>9</sup>.

Another important aspect of Gen. Sikorski's activities of this period was his attempt to strengthen Poland's position on the international arena. He devoted much time on talks with allied leaders. Between August 1941 and July 1942 Sikorski met with all members of the so called Big Three. He held five meetings with the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill (23rd August and 24th October 1941, 31st January, 11th March and 26th April 1942)<sup>10</sup>. He conferred with the Soviet leader Joseph Stalin in Moscow on 3rd and 4th December 1941, and held talks in Washington with US President Franklin D. Roosevelt, on 24th and 26th March 1942.

The list of political and military persons with whom Gen. Sikorski met during this period is much longer. Mention can be made of: King George VI of the United Kingdom, King Haakon VII of Norway, King Peter II of Yugoslavia, Queen Wilhelmina of The Netherlands, President Edvard Beneš of Czechoslovakia, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi Shah of Iran, Mackenzie King Prime Minister of Canada, Dušan Simović Prime Minister of Yugoslavia, Emmanouil Tsouderos Prime Minister of Greece, Johan Nygaardsvold Prime Minister of Norway, Hussein Sirri Prime Minister of Egypt, Nuri as-Said Prime Minister of Iraq, Paul van Zeeland a former Prime Minister of Belgium, Anthony Eden British Foreign Secretary, Vyacheslav Molotov Soviet Foreign Minister, General Sir Alan Brooke the British Chief of the Imperial General Staff, General Sir Claude Auchinleck GOC-in-C British Forces in the Middle East, General George Marshall US Chief of the General Staff and Frances's General Charles de Gaulle.

The question of the expansion of the Polish Armed Forces and political issues dominate the War Diary. However, this does not mean that these were the only areas in which General Sikorski was active. It should be remembered that the War Diary is a very specific document, regulated towards certain aspects of the Polish C-in-C and Prime Minister's activities. Thus other themes such as the political internal strife and contacts with occupied Poland are treated marginally. This does not mean that the careful reader will not find mention of these topics.

---

<sup>8</sup> Full stenographic report of those talks, see W. Anders, *Bez ostatniego rozdziału. Wspomnienia z lat 1939–1946* (English language edition entitled: *An Army in Exile*), Warsaw 2018, p. 124–146.

<sup>9</sup> R. Majzner, *Attachaty wojskowe Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej 1919–1945. Strukturalno-organizacyjne aspekty funkcjonowania* (*Military attaché offices of the Second Republic. Structural and organisational aspects of their functioning*), Częstochowa 2014, p. 482.

<sup>10</sup> *Na najwyższym szczeblu. Spotkania premierów Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej i Wielkiej Brytanii podczas II wojny światowej* (*At the highest level. Meetings between the Prime Ministers of the Republic of Poland and Great Britain during the Second World War*), ed. M. K. Kamiński, J. Tebinka, Warsaw 1999, p. 29–65.

The upkeep of the War Dairy was the responsibility of General Sikorski's ADCs, whose work was overseen by Lt-Col. Zygmunt Borkowski the Chef de Cabinet of the C-in-C and Minister of Military Affairs<sup>11</sup>. In July 1941 the post of ADCs to Gen. Sikorski were held by Lt. Józef Ponikiewski PN and Lt. Janusz Tyszkiewicz-Łącki. On 8th August they were joined by Capt. Marian Piotrowski PAF<sup>12</sup>. Ponikiewski was to remain ADC and be killed with Sikorski at Gibraltar. Tyszkiewicz remained until 1 June 1942 when Lt. Zygmunt Fudakowski took over as the army ADC (his particular brief was the personal safety of the C-in-C). Fudakowski was replaced on 23 July 1942 by Capt. Michał Miszke. Piotrowski remained in post until 20 February 1942 and from 2 March the air force ADC was Lt. Czesław Głowczyński PAF, whose tasks especially included the keeping of the War Diary and overseeing photographic and press material. It should be remembered that from the beginning, Regina and 2nd/Lt. Dr Edmund Oppman were involved in the editing of the War Diary. It was the typescript of the War Dairy of the C-in-C which was the inspiration for this current edition and whose text has been included in this expanded edition.

The material presented here comes from the archival grouping „War Diary of the Commander-in-Chief” (ref. KOL.1/DCNW) forming one of the central collections of the Archives of the Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum in London. The period covered in this volume are covered by handwritten manuscript diaries, file numbers: 55 (1 August - 31 December 1941), file 56 (also 1 August - 31 December 1941) and file 57 (1 January - 31 July 1942). In comparison to the previous period there are definitely fewer volumes. File 56 is a draft manuscript of file 55. Files 55 and 56 are of an identical British type *T.J. & J. Smith's Datada Diary 1941* in hard brown covers, measuring 32.5 cm × 20.7 cm. File 55 described as the „original” has 388 paginated pages containing entries in navy, green and red ink. The entries made in file 56, covering 307 paginated pages, described as a „draft”, were made in pencil. File 57 contains 756 paginated pages and is a diary of the type *Collins Half-Hour Appointment Diary 1942* in a hard dark navy cover, measuring 33.5 cm × 21 cm. Entries in this diary were made in black, navy and blue inks.

Similarly as in the previous two volumes, the typescript manuscript of the daily entries of Gen. Sikorski's War Diary for the period 1 August 1941 to 31 July 1942, as prepared by Regina Oppman and kept in twelve files numbered KOL.1/DCNW/25-36 is regarded as a source document.

Jarostaw Rabiński

(Translated by Andrzej Suchcitz)

---

<sup>11</sup> Further on this matter see: J. Rabiński, *Wstęp (Introduction)* [in:] *Dziennik czynności Naczelnego Wodza gen. Władysława Sikorskiego (War Diary of the Commander-in-Chief General Władysław Sikorski)*, gened. J. Rabiński, eds: J. Rabiński, J. Kowalska, E. Rzczkowska, Vol. II, Lublin 2017, p. 10–12; D. Koreś, *Gabinet Ministra Spraw Wojskowych (Obrony Narodowej) i Naczelnego Wodza (szefa Sztabu Głównego) PSZ w latach 1939–1945 (The Secretariat of the Minister of Military Affairs (National Defence) and Commander-in-Chief (Chief of General Staff) of the Polish Armed Forces in the years 1939–1945)* [in:] *Studia z dziejów Polskich Sił Zbrojnych na Zachodzie 1939–1947 (Studies about the Polish Armed Forces in the West 1939–1947)*, eds. P.Chmielowiec, K. A. Tochman, Rzeszów–Warsaw 2019, p. 29–33.

<sup>12</sup> J. Rabiński, *Wstęp (Introduction)*, p. 11.