



Capitulation

On September 29, Gen. „Bór” wires to London: “Our struggle is dying out.” There is no longer any hope of help for the fighting Warsaw. The civilian population and wounded soldiers find themselves in a tragic position. Famine is rampant in the city. In the last days of September, the Home Army Commander sends peace envoys to initiate parleys for surrender of the city. On October 2, the agreement on suspension of warfare operations in Warsaw is signed in Ożarów. According to the treaty, insurgents are to lay down their arms and leave the city in tight formations together with their commanders. The civilian population is to leave the city as well. The Germans deport the AK soldiers to numerous POW camps inside the Reich. On their way to camps soldiers are persecuted and once they arrive they are not given any water for a long time. Civilians pass through a temporary camp in Pruszków, where Germans conduct selection. Some of the men and women are deported to forced labor in Germany, while others are sent to Radom, Częstochowa, and Kraków. A few Varsovians, with a handful of Jews among them, hide in the ruins until the arrival of the Red Army on January 17, 1945. These are the so-called “Robinsons”.

More than 18 thousand insurgents and 180 thousand civilians die in the Rising. There are many representatives of the Polish elite among the fallen and the murdered. The Germans break provisions of the capitulation treaty and carry out the long-planned action of destroying Warsaw. Only 64 out of 987 historical buildings remain untouched. Most of Warsaw’s monuments, schools, churches and libraries - including the National, Public and University Libraries - undergo massive destruction. Archives and works of art are turned into ashes. “Warsaw has been destroyed, the past and the soul of Poland has been incinerated [...]. After its loss we are nationally, culturally and spiritually impoverished” - writes Stanisław Cat-Mackiewicz.

The defeat of the Rising is also the defeat of Polish aspirations for independence, decisively ruled out by the leaders of the USA, the Soviet Union and Great Britain at the conference in Yalta. Destroying Warsaw, potentially the biggest center of resistance against the new occupation, makes it easier to impose the communist system of power and to sovietize Polish society.
