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## The Soviet Army Northern Military Group in Poland in the years 1945-1956 : invader in the role of an ally

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**The Soviet Army Northern Military Group in Poland  
in the Years 1945-1956: Invader in the Role of an Ally<sup>1</sup>**

One month after the end of World War II in Europe, on June 10, 1945 the USSR created an occupying military structure in Poland called the Red Army Northern Military Group (or Północna Grupa Wojska Armii Radzieckiej, PGW AR).<sup>2</sup> It was based on the troops of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Belarussian Front which had been operating up to May 1945 in northern Poland, West Pomerania and Mecklenburg.<sup>3</sup> The PGW were stationed on Polish territory for 48 years, till 1993. In this time they played a number of important roles, some characteristic of the period in question and others which remained important throughout the length of their stay in Poland.

For many years the history of Soviet troops in Poland after World War II could not be researched as to do so would undermine the image of Polish-Russian relations presented through the propaganda. The end of censorship in Poland enabled the publication of the first works in this area, though till now they have remained few and far between.<sup>4</sup> The problem of the Soviet military presence seems to also appear in works mainly concentrated on Polish political and economic history after World War II,

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<sup>1</sup> This text is an abridged version of the article published in the Polish edition of *Czasy Nowożytne* (Modern Times), vol. VI, 1999, pp. 37-115. The list of the SAPGW bases has also been omitted.

<sup>2</sup> In March 1946 the name "Red Army" was replaced with a new one, "the Soviet Army"

<sup>3</sup> *Rusky Archiv*, vol. 14, book 3, part 1, SSSR i Polska. 1941-1945. Moscow 1994, p. 432, doc. no. 69

<sup>4</sup> *Pożegnanie z armią. Z gen. Zdzisławem Ostrowskim rozmawia Mieczysław Szczepański* (Farewell to the Army: General Zdzisław Ostrowski Interviewed by Mieczysław Szczepański), Warsaw 1992

especially if these works refer to places where PGW garrisons were stationed.<sup>5</sup>

The importance of the Soviet military on Polish territory in the years from 1948 to 1956 can be viewed from a number of aspects. The first is the military aspect involving the organisation and effective enforcement of Soviet units, as well as their military character. Another aspect of the PGW is its political significance. This was distinctively related to the military role and with its readiness to engage in any police actions, to undertake broad intelligence activities, and to engage readily in Polish political life. PGW propaganda was another part of the political aspect.

The peculiar significance of the PGW in Poland lay in its economic role. This was the case particularly from 1945 to 1947. There was practically no part of the economy in Poland left uninfluenced by the Soviet army. Even on the territories where the army was not stationed the consequences of various economic activities of the army were felt. The situation prevailed in industry, agriculture and municipal administration, including the provision of various services and housing. After 1948 this role of the PGW gradually started to diminish in importance.

The role of the PGW in Polish industry after World War II resulted from its taking over earlier tasks of battle frontlines when the current needs of the fighting army and Soviet military industry were satisfied with all facilities that were seen as useful. Due to efforts made by the Polish authorities, a significant part of industry was already being administered

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<sup>5</sup> Władze komunistyczne wobec Ziem Odzyskanych po II wojnie światowej. Materiały z konferencji pod red. S. Łacha" (Communist Authorities and Their Approach to the Regained Territories after World War II: Conference Papers ed. by S. Łach), Słupsk 1997; B. Okoniewska, „Przeobrażenia ekonomiczne w rolnictwie województwa gdańskiego w latach 1945-1958" (Economic Transformation in the Gdańsk Voivodeship Agriculture in the Years 1945-1958), *Zeszyty Naukowe Wydziału Humanistycznego*. Historia 19, Gdańsk 1988; „Problemy narodowościowe i wyznaniowe na Pomorzu Nadwiślańskim i Kujawach w XX w." (National and Religious Identity Problems in the Vistula Pomerania and the Kujawy in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century), ed. by Ryszard Sudziński, Toruń 1997, with: M. Golon, „Polityka radzieckich władz wojskowych wobec ludności Torunia po zakończeniu okupacji niemieckiej (1945-1949)" (The Policy of the Soviet Military Authorities towards the Inhabitants of Toruń after German Occupation (1945-1949), pp. 93-189; „Rok 1945. Sprawozdania pełnomocników rządu i wojewody" (1945: Reports of Government Representatives and the Voivode), ed. by R. Kozłowski, Warszawa 1997; „Okręg Mazurski w raportach Jakuba Prawina. Wybór dokumentów z 1945 r." (District of Mazury in Jakub Prawin's Reports. A Selection of Documents from 1945), ed. by T. Baryła, Olsztyn 1995.

by Poland by the end of the war. The situation was very different on the new territories where the Soviet army was almost entirely responsible for the administration of industry even after the war and went so far as to partially dismantle factories worth approximately 2 billion dollars.<sup>6</sup> The USSR, with this immense plunder, diminished the importance of the new territories as compensation for the land taken away, and proved that their goal was to weaken Poland economically. Still, in the summer of 1945 the entire industry was returned to Poland. It turned out however that the PGW decided to continue to run hundreds of factories for a few years. In the second half of 1945 and partially in 1946 the number of enterprises operated by the Soviet army exceeded 1000, and by 1947 that number had dropped to 500.<sup>7</sup> By 1948 it had fallen to 207. The businesses represented many different sectors of the economy. All types of companies can be enumerated, as if the PGW wanted to function without the necessity to purchase on the Polish market or get the supplies from the USSR. Apart from creameries, mills, distilleries, bakeries, slaughterhouses, can factories, smokehouses, vodka factories, breweries, softdrink bottling plants, and tens of elevator plants, the list of companies included factories manufacturing shoes (Biały Kamień), buttons (Wałbrzych), clothing (Legnica), sewing machines and motorcycles (Legnica), gloves (Świdnica), paper and cellulose (Leszno Górne), and so on. They were concentrated mainly in Lower Silesia, with seventeen in Legnica alone and fifteen around Wałbrzych.

In 1948 most of the facilities operated by the PGW were reclaimed. In the middle of that year seven such facilities were reclaimed in Trzebiatów, among them can and tile factories, a sawmill, an electric mill, a slaughterhouse, dry cleaners and a bathhouse.<sup>8</sup> Only then did the town become really Polish. In the fall of 1948 another fishing center, Darłowo, was reclaimed along with eighteen fishing boats, nine shipwrecks and a fish processing plant. The PGW also returned a mill in Bodzęcin, a power

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<sup>6</sup> A. Korzon, „Niektóre problemy polsko-radzieckich stosunków gospodarczych w l. 1945-47” (Selected Problems in Polish-Soviet Economic Relations in the Years 1945 to 1947), *Studia z Dziejów Rosji i Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, vol. XXVIII, pp. 135-136.

<sup>7</sup> A. Magierska, „Przywrócić Polsce. Przemysł na Ziemiach Odzyskanych 1945-1946” (Give Back to Poland. Industry on the Regained Territories in 1945 and 1946), Warsaw 1986, pp. 227-229

<sup>8</sup> Archiwum Akt Nowych (New File Archive, AAN), „Delegatura Rządu RP (PRL) przy Północnej Grupie Wojsk Armii Radzieckiej w Legnicy 1946-1946” (The Representation of the RP (PRL) Government to the Soviet Army Northern Military Group in Legnica in the years 1946 to 1946, PGW AR), call no. 34, Report for Feb. 29 – May 1, 1948

plant in Lubiąż and slaughterhouses in Wałbrzych, Białogard, Legnica, Szczecinek, Słupsk and Koszalin, leaving parts of cold storage plants at their disposal.<sup>9</sup>

The decrease in the number of plants used by the PGW resulted both from the lower number of soldiers as well as the gradual change in the way the group was serviced. The supplies needed were more and more often ordered from the Polish authorities. The leaders of the party and state, strictly obedient to Moscow, primarily Bierut and Minc, guaranteed that this form of providing services to the PGW would be as convenient as when the PGW produced them in the plants seized. In 1947 the PGW made purchases in Poland to the value of 53.6 million złotys. In 1948 that figure reached 195.5 million złotys. Food products were dominant in the purchases. In the 1950s the PGW did not use any major group of industrial businesses. It would also turn over single companies, like the brewery in Legnica in 1953. Industrial resources at its disposal had by that time already been either moved out of the country or sold. Scarce trade transactions – except for PGW purchases on the Polish market – concerned e.g. the remains of scrap.

Another branch of the economy where the PGW was extremely active was agriculture. In 1945 the Soviet military was responsible for the administration of some two hundred estates making up more than 1 million hectares of land. A year later they forced the Polish authorities to guarantee them the right to administer 912 estates with 675 thousand hectares of land,<sup>10</sup> and in 1948 they still ran 460 of them with 160 thousand hectares. By that time these estates served as storage space for booty consisting of livestock and goods to a lesser degree than in the years 1945 to 1946, and became the regular source of food supplies. The process of lowering and eventually extinguishing Soviet presence in agriculture lasted till 1950. Before the facilities were returned, they had been looted, and that they had been exploited for free was already a loss in itself. The plunder of livestock and goods weakened Polish farming for years to come. Approximately a million heads of cattle alone had been driven out. It is recorded that in March 1947 one hundred thousand heads of cattle were brought to the USSR from the estates returned by the PGW.<sup>11</sup>

Additionally, no form of control that normally existed in Red Army bases or city garrisons was exercised in the seized farms, effectively stimulating crime in a great degree. Finally, various services and housing

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<sup>9</sup> AAN, PGW AR, call no. 34, Report for Feb. 29 – May 1, 1948

<sup>10</sup> AAN, PGW AR, call no. 28; MAP, call no. 27

<sup>11</sup> AAN, Regained Territories Ministry (MZO), call no. 62, Report of the Government Representative for Mar. 20 – April 10, 1947

matters were an economic problem. In 1947 the housing space occupied by the PGW was 2,5 million square meters. Such services like energy, water and gas supplies etc. were a great burden for local authorities at the peak of PGW presence. In many places these services generated hundreds of thousands or even millions of zlotys in debts. There were numerous problems in trying to have them paid, especially because of incomplete information on the unit that was serviced. As an example, in 1948 26 million zlotys were collected, but tens of millions of zlotys were lost as "insufficiently documented". In 1950 Polish authorities, dependent on the USSR, remitted largest debts including at least a couple of tens of millions of zlotys for energy supply. Accurate figures of the remission could not be retrieved due to incomplete documentation and was made even more difficult for the fact that the remission covered debts generated before PGW was created. Undoubtedly, the figure stood at some hundreds of millions of zlotys. The decision stated: "*all liabilities of the Soviet Military to territorial authority unions generated in the years 1945 to 1947 are remitted. Liabilities generated later (from 1948 on) will be regulated.*" The remission covered also rent on facilities used by the PGW, which meant more hundreds of millions of zlotys over a couple of years. Such decisions were the effect of ever growing Soviet influences in Poland – in January 1947 the Council of Ministers categorically stated that the PGW was bound to regulate all its liabilities to territorial authorities and citizens.<sup>12</sup>

With more serious economic PGW activities finished, PGW importance in Poland in the Stalinist era lied in the military and political role played by the group. The military role of the Soviet military was to some extent a continuation of the role played by the predecessor of the PGW, i.e. one of Red Army frontlines. For Stalin World War II did not end in 1945. His imperial plans regarding Western Europe made every Soviet division in Poland potential force supporting any military action.

The formal reasons for PGW stationing in Poland was of military and logistic character. Its importance was more than just military however, and if it was to be exercised, it had a much larger scope of tasks. The organization of PGW units and distinctive features of their bases determined PGW's military and political importance. Undoubtedly as early as in 1945 a conception was developed that foresaw the use of former German military infrastructure of the new territories as well as some facilities within the territory of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Republic. The headquarters of the

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<sup>12</sup> AAN, MAP, call no. 1466, Letter of the Legal Office of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers, Jan. 7, 1947

group were placed in Legnica.<sup>13</sup> The manner in which this city was seized was the best evidence of the occupational role of the PGW. The authorities of the Lower Silesia Voivodeship and Poles, some five thousand of them in the city at that time, were given just one day on July 11, 1945 to get out of the most affluent part of the city.<sup>14</sup>

Among other ones, the following cities were chosen by the PGW to host larger garrisons, apart from Legnica: Brzeg, Oleśnica, Żagań, Wrocław, Szprotawa, Białogard, Świdnica, Świebodzice, Wałbrzych, Szczecin and Świnoujście, though the two latter ones were not directly under PGW authority. The garrisons comprised of entire sequestered parts of the cities. Smaller garrisons were created also in Poznań, Września, Bydgoszcz, Gorzów, Toruń, Gdańsk, Łowicz, Rembertów, Malbork and Elbląg. The PGW left some of these cities in the first half of the 1950s. In the years 1947 to 1950 Soviet units withdrew also from Lubin, Opole, a few Upper Silesian cities, and Koszalin, Słupsk, Lębork. Apart from a number of city garrisons left at its disposal at the end of 1940s, the PGW had sequestered bases, too. Some of them were entire towns, like Borne Sulinowo near Szczecinek, Strachów and Świątoszów near Bolesławiec.

The 1950s saw some changes in the location of the Soviet bases. Usually, the PGW would leave town after town, and very seldom did it move into a new one. Generally though, at the end of the 1940s a group of some sixty most important Soviet military units in Poland formed, making the basis for the functioning of the PGW right till the 1990s. The changes of October 1956 did not involve the well-formed PGW structure. Sequestered military bases or city garrisons were placed mainly in Lower Silesia and West Pomerania. The number and importance of the units outside these two regions were of marginal character. In December 1947 in all facilities occupied by the PGW there were 1,6 million square meters of barracks, 0,5 million square meters of offices, 2,5 million square meters of apartments, and 1,05 million square meters of warehouses.<sup>15</sup> On the turn of the 1940s and 1950s, this space, 4,6 million square meters in total (without warehouses), was decreased to approximately 2,7 million square meters of barracks, including just 300 thousand in the old territories.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> According to B. Potyrała, the first PGW headquarters were to be place in Bydgoszcz (B. Potyrała, „PGW AR w woj. legnickim...”, p. 118); Soviet authorities may have been considering placing it in Toruń as well (M. Golon, „Polityka radzieckich władz...”, p. 140)

<sup>14</sup> AAN, MAP, call no. 2423, Letters by S. Piaskowski of July 11 and 13, 1945

<sup>15</sup> AAN, PGW AR, call no. 34, Report by Major M. Weintraub of Dec. 16, 1947

<sup>16</sup> T. Pióro, „W kleszczach wojennej psychozy. Obciążenia obronne Polski 1950-1955” (In the Grip of War Neurosis. Defense Obligation of Poland between 1950 and 1955), *Więź*, 1995, no. 8, p. 141

The partial withdrawal of the Soviet military of 1947 and 1948 included tens of towns, among them Lower Silesian towns from which the 65<sup>th</sup> Army of General P. Batov was withdrawn. In 1948 the PGW returned, among others, 75 houses in Żagań, and the airfield in Grudziądz, as well as went on to return houses in Wałbrzych, Świebodzice and Świdnica; this process began in 1947. Some facilities were also returned in Legnica, Bolesławiec, Białogard, Szprotawa, Lubiąż, Dzierżoniów and Brzeg.<sup>17</sup> In 1949 PGW troops left Złotoria.<sup>18</sup> In 1950 the PGW turned over the barracks in Koszalin and Słupsk. At the beginning of the 1950s only some 70 or 80 bases and garrisons were left, tens of them were left by mid 1950s, among them military units in Malbork, Elbląg, Olsztyn, Gorzów, Bydgoszcz and Poznań.<sup>19</sup> In mid 1950s the group occupied 60 bases and continued to do so until the 1990s.

In many cities the PGW had only small groups of its members, mostly army officers sent to various towns to supervise communications or work together with Polish military units. They performed a number of special tasks, mostly in the fields of intelligence and counterintelligence. Such groups of PGW officers existed for sure in all major garrisons of the Polish Army.

The PGW had occupied the majority of facilities it used in the 1950s since 1945. Only a minor part of the bases was seized at a later time, e.g. the airfields in Kluczewo in 1948 and Krzywa in 1953,<sup>20</sup> as well as in Wschowa in 1956.<sup>21</sup> The base in Kluczewo was enlarged by the village of Burzykowo in 1952, with six farmers displaced.<sup>22</sup> A year earlier the base in Chojna was enlarged and two farmers displaced.<sup>23</sup> PGW base in Bagicz was enlarged by 5 hectares in 1955 at the expense of two farmers.<sup>24</sup> In 1955 near Szprotawa 2 hectares were seized and incorporated into the Soviet base. There were other gains of the PGW, though returned after a few years, like the seat of the Forest Management in Gorzów seized and

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<sup>17</sup> AAN, PGW AR, call no. 34, The Cases of the Representation in Legnica for May 1 – July 5, 1948

<sup>18</sup> AAN, PGW AR, call no. 63

<sup>19</sup> AAN, PGW AR, call no. 90, Letter of Colonel M. Reszetko to the Representation, April 5, 1952

<sup>20</sup> AAN, PGW AR, call no. 118, Letter of the Polish Army Headquarters, Jan 14, 1953

<sup>21</sup> „Identyfikacja i wycena szkód...”, pp. 153, 173

<sup>22</sup> AAN, PGW AR, call no. 81, The Motion of the Government Representative (requested by the PGW) to Liquidate the Village of Burzykowo

<sup>23</sup> AAN, PGW AR, call no. 81, The Motion of the Representation of July 7, 1951

<sup>24</sup> AAN, PGW AR, call no. 203, Letter of the WRN Presidium Military Dept. In Koszalin to the Representation, Jan. 25, 1956

turned into military barracks. In 1955 in Świnoujście a part of the seashore was incorporated into a Soviet base to serve merely recreational and not military purposes.<sup>25</sup>

In 1957 the PGW base in Szprotawa was to be significantly enlarged but in December 1956 Soviet authorities gave up the project, undoubtedly an effect of political changes in Poland.<sup>26</sup> An interesting example of PGW influence is the change of borders between Zielona Góra and Wrocław Voivodeships. Its reason was to incorporate the bases in Świątoszów and Szprotawa to the Wrocław Voivodeship and simplify contacts with Polish authorities since from then on the whole firing ground remained within one county in Bolesławiec.<sup>27</sup>

PGW facilities scattered around the whole country worked together for various military reasons. Public roads and railway were used as the means of transport. Polish authorities were not informed of any military movements and even formal agreements concluded after 1956 did not improve this significantly. The movement of the Soviet military was even heavier because units in various places used facilities somewhat distant from one another, like the one in Świdnica that used a firing ground in the village of Witoszów; it was necessary to use public roads in order to reach it. This gave rise to accidents and increased the devastation of roads. As uncontrolled by the Polish authorities as movements inside the country were the activities of the PGW marine base in Świnoujście where ships would sail in and out without the notification of the Polish authorities.

After 1956 PGW garrisons did not undergo any major changes. The bases were modernized, which was the result of progress in military technology. The fact that the PGW returned 525 buildings and took over from the Polish authorities 186 others in the "post-October" era illustrates the stable situation in this field. Among the facilities returned were the resort quarters in Świnoujście together with 3,5 kilometers of beach, a group of buildings in Lubin and two hospital wings in Warsaw. Among the objects acquired by the PGW were the airfield in Wschowa and an 80-hectare firing ground in Wędrzyn, as well as smaller parcels of land nearby the bases. The acreage of bases also shows the stabilization of PGW structure. In 1958 the PGW was using 69,9 thousand hectares, when in 1965 the figure was 70,2 thousand. Over these seven years the PGW

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<sup>25</sup> AAN, PGW AR, call no. 203, Director of the Foreign Ministry Military Dept. to the Representation, Feb. 28, 1956

<sup>26</sup> AAN, PGW AR, call no. 203, WRN Presidium in Wrocław to the Representation, Dec. 12, 1956

<sup>27</sup> AAN, PGW AR, call no. 118., pp. 23-26

returned 637 hectares to the Polish authorities and obtained new acreage of 1037 hectares. Transactions of that sort were even rarer in the next years.<sup>28</sup>

It is difficult to discuss the military role of the PGW since there is no detailed research based on Soviet military documentation. Officially, the military task of the PGW was to protect transport routes between the USSR and Germany; this explanation must be dismissed however.<sup>29</sup> According to B. Potyrała, in the case of a military provocation the PGW was to expand the assault after the enemy had been crushed on the Elbe River. Should the enemy break the front, the PGW was to counterattack.<sup>30</sup> These tasks could be realized together with the Polish Army or with the support of USSR military districts. In the years 1951 to 1956 the Soviet authorities ordered Poland to improve transport infrastructure, enabling fast movements of significant Soviet forces to Poland and Germany.<sup>31</sup> In 1953 the PGW was strengthened with units of the nearby Belarussian and Baltic districts; it was an effect of the ongoing Korean War and an uprising in the DDR.<sup>32</sup>

A government agreement "*on the legal status of the Soviet military temporarily stationing in Poland*" of December 17, 1956, leaving details to be regulated with separate agreements, set the number of bases at that of 1956. There were 59 military units on some 70 thousand hectares of land. There were 62 to 66 thousand soldiers to be stationed. Only 35 bases had the status of independent garrisons. Throughout the entire period of Soviet military presence in Poland access to them was very limited to the Polish authorities. Descriptions of the bases come from a very late period, namely from the 1990s. These sources are valuable however even for the initial period of PGW's stay in Poland. Costly, mostly German infrastructure was used by the PGW in most bases after 1945. When modernized, the original character of most facilities, like airfields, barracks etc., was preserved, and capacity left unchanged or increased. In a few cases the increase in capacity was large.

Of over 50 buildings half were small, like military garrisons and warehouses located in towns and lacking larger areas around them, e.g.

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<sup>28</sup> AAN, KC PZPR, call no.2631, Report of the Activities of the PRL Government Representative and the Polish Delegation to the Polish-Soviet Committee for May 1957 to Dec. 31, 1965, pp. 11-13

<sup>29</sup> *Dokumenty i materiały do historii stosunków polsko-radzieckich*, (Documents and Materials on the History of Polish-Soviet Relations), vol. 9, Warsaw 1974, p. 31

<sup>30</sup> B. Potyrała, „PGW AR w woj. legnickim...”, op. cit, p. 119

<sup>31</sup> AAN, KC PZPR, package 134, file 1, S. Jędrychowski Materials

<sup>32</sup> B. Potyrała, „PGW AR w woj. legnickim...”, op. cit, p. 119; also, B. Potyrała, „Dowódcy PGW...”, p. 93

firing grounds or airfields. This resulted in 21 bases occupying some 60 thousand hectares, i.e. 86% of the total acreage used by the PGW in 1956.<sup>33</sup> All larger bases comprised of barrack and residential compounds, and fuel tanks (stations, warehouses, fuel storage tanks). Based on the function performed, the following groups of facilities can be distinguished: operational and stand-by airfields, detached fuel tanks, fuel tanks within other facilities, military compounds with firing grounds, munitions warehouses, city garrisons, and one military seaport. Operational airfields were placed in Bagicz, Kluczewo, Chojna, Szprotawa, Stara Kopernia, Brzeg, Krzywa and Legnica. A number of stand-by airfields were in use, like that in Wschowa. Bases with airfields were additionally used for fuel storage. Some detached fuel tanks were placed in Raszówka, Karczmarka and Jankowa Żagańska in Lower Silesia. The largest fuel tank was placed in Świnoujście.<sup>34</sup>

Many units performed more functions than one. Świnoujście was a military port and the largest fuel and munitions storage point. Legnica and Świdnica were both city garrisons and fuel tanks. Only four bases were larger than one thousand hectares: Borne Sulinowo, Strachów, Świetoszów, and the smallest of these, Kluczewo. The first three totaled 53,7 thousand hectares and were large firing grounds at the same time. Some PGW units used firing grounds of the Polish Army. Still, even smaller units had an important role to play, like the base in Legnica, with a garrison, PGW Headquarters and an airfield, all this on just 300 hectares.<sup>35</sup>

When discussing the military role, a few remarks must be made on the number of PGW soldiers. Only after the agreement of December 1956 was concluded the first more or less complete figures indicated 62 to 66 thousand soldiers excluding their families and civil personnel. In the years 1956 to 1991 the number of staff officers and their families was over 100 thousand persons. There are no documented figures for the period before 1956. In May 1945 when most of the Red Army was fighting in the territories taken over by Poland, there were approximately 1,5 million Soviet soldiers there. They were quickly moved to the occupation sector in Germany, to the USSR and the Far East. Large units were concentrated in the northern part of East Prussia, turned into the Kaliningrad District of the special character with a great number of ground troops and marine bases. Still in 1946 though the troops were numerous at a great number of towns in Poland where the Red Army units were stationed. From June 1945 till

<sup>33</sup> „Identyfikacja i wycena szkód...”, p. 9

<sup>34</sup> Ibidem, p. 183

<sup>35</sup> Ibidem, p. 131

1948 thirteen eldest classes of the Red Army were demobilized.<sup>36</sup> According to estimates, the number of Soviet soldiers in Poland in the years 1946 to 1949 was approximately 300 thousand.<sup>37</sup> There were 50 thousand inhabitants in the Soviet part of Legnica alone in 1949 and only a part of them were Germans employed by the PGW.

Hundreds of thousands of PGW soldiers present in the 1940s prove the official explanations of their transit route-protecting role to be not trustworthy. The character of the bases also shown great military potential of the group, not only as a route-protecting force, but one capable of more serious operations.

The gradual reduction of the Soviet military force in the years 1945 to 1948 limited the number of PGW soldiers to over one or two hundred thousand at the end of the 1940s. This can only be estimated, as there are no objective figures whatsoever. The capacity of Soviet bases was high enough to have hundreds of thousands of soldiers. In Świętoszów alone 80 thousand soldiers could be stationed. 120 apartment buildings and 476 barracks had some 400 thousand square meters of space in the 1990s. 18 thousand soldiers and 5 thousand of their family members lived there at that time. Half of these facilities were built before 1945. Even a small PGW base in Łowicz, with no new constructions after 1956, housed over 2 thousand soldiers.

On the other hand it must be kept in mind that with a large Soviet military group of some 400 thousand in the DDR and many units in the Kaliningrad District and over the Bug River, there was no need for the USSR to maintain an extraordinarily strong military presence in Poland. Tightened control over the Polish army and a fully subservient political system of the Stalin era with the PZPR created in December 1948 made it redundant to maintain an army similarly large as the Polish Army which at the end of 1949 had some 170 thousand soldiers. Due to Stalin's aggressive plans, the number of Polish soldiers increased to 360 thousand in 1955,<sup>38</sup> yet the army was fully controlled by Marshal K. Rokossowski. That PGW forces were not at all large at the end of the Stalin era can be inferred from Gomułka's words of November 1957: *"Initially we thought more troops were stationed in Poland than they said, and it turns out that there's very little troops. I won't give numbers because there's no need to*

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<sup>36</sup> *Radzieckie siły zbrojne 1918-1968*, (Soviet Armed Forces 1918 to 1968), ed. by M. Zacharow, Warsaw 1970, p. 602

<sup>37</sup> *Zeszyty Historyczne*, no. 6, Paris 1964, p. 7

<sup>38</sup> T. Pióro, „W kleszczach...”, p. 141

give them".<sup>39</sup> The figures presented to Gomułka probably quoted a number similar to that of the treaty – 62 to 66 thousand soldiers excluding their families and civil staff. Khrushchev is supposed to have said to Gomułka in November 1956 in Moscow that the PGW comprised of two armored and two airforce brigades.<sup>40</sup> The Polish Army had over 300 thousand soldiers, thus was much larger, and in the neighboring DDR 400 thousand troops were stationed, which can also be a reference point for Gomułka. Naturally, Khrushchev could not have disclosed all figures.

When discussing PGW's military role a few remarks must be made on the group's staff. Between 1945 and 1956 there were five chief commanders of the PGW. Konstanty Rokossowski, the originator of the group, had been in command of the group for four years, until he was appointed the Marshal of Poland and National Defense Minister. General Kuzma Trubnikov replaced him in the post of the chief commander until August 1950. Just like most PGW generals, he came from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Belarussian Front. After the group was created, he was one of Rokossowski's deputies in charge of contacts with Polish authorities. In March 1946 the KRN awarded him with Krzyż Grunwaldu [the Tannenberg (Battle) Cross].\*\*\*<sup>41</sup> The third PGW commander of almost two years, until July 1952, was General Aleksander Radziejewski, who had for five years served in the occupational group in Germany.<sup>42</sup> The PGW had strongest ties with the occupational force in Germany because these groups were near each other and had similar military and economic tasks. The fourth commander was General Mikhail Konstantinov.<sup>43</sup> The first PGW commander within the Warsaw Pact structures was General Colonel Kuźma Galicki, from August 1955 till February 1958. Galicki was the first commander of the military district of the northern part of East Prussia, the USSR group nearest to the PGW. In the first month after PGW creation General A. Bogolubov was the Chief of Staff of Rokossowski, and was replaced by General Pavel Kotov-Legonkov till November 1949. His successors were General W. Baskakov (1954-1956) and General G. Stogy

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<sup>39</sup> *Secret Documents of the Political Bureau. PRL-USSR 1956-1970*, introduction by A. Paczkowski, London 1998, p. 26, W. Gomułka's account of the talks in Moscow, Nov. 22, 1957

<sup>40</sup> R. Łoś, „Obecność wojsk...”, p. 105

<sup>41</sup> *Dokumenty i materiały do historii stosunków polsko-radzieckich*, (Documents and Materials on the History of Polish-Soviet Relations), vol. 9, Jan. 1946 – Dec. 1949, Warsaw 1974, p. 33; B. Potyrała, „dowódcy...”, p. 92

<sup>42</sup> B. Potyrała, H. Szczegóła, *Czerwoni marszałkowie. Elita armii radzieckiej 1935-1991* (Red Marshals: The Soviet Military Elite 1935-1991), Zielona Góra 1997, p. 360

<sup>43</sup> B. Potyrała, „Dowódcy...”, p. 94, pp. 105-106

(June 1956 – May 1962).<sup>44</sup> Among PGW leadership in the first years after the war dominant were the generals that continued their command of their former units and were gradually demobilized. General Pavel Batov was in command of the 65<sup>th</sup> Army being part of the PGW until 1948. General Konstantin Vershinin commanded the 4<sup>th</sup> Airforce Army during the war and then PGW airforce until April 1946. The 4<sup>th</sup> Army remained within the PGW and used numerous former German airfields. General Peter Tertishny was Chief of the Combat Training Department between 1945 and 1948. Until 1953, General Dimitr Vilkhovchenko was Deputy Chief of PGW Staff in charge of political affairs.<sup>45</sup> General Andrei Okorokov was the first Chief of PGW Political Board; he fulfilled the same function earlier within the 2<sup>nd</sup> Belarussian Front. One of his co-workers, also in the times of the war, was General Alexander Russkikh, a member of PGW War Council. Colonel Protasov was Okorokov's Deputy in 1948.<sup>46</sup> Of over 10 thousand Soviet officers sent back from the Polish Army to the Soviet Army between 1945 and 1946 a part remained in Poland and joined the PGW. This move affected all political department officers, which again shows the tasks of the group were broader than military. The PGW took over a part of the Soviet aviation officers leaving the Polish Army.<sup>47</sup>

PGW commanders were independent from Polish authorities, and the imbalance in Polish-Russian relations was apparent in the approach of Rokossowski, his successors and lower ranking officers. One example of this approach was that they did not treat Polish territory as belonging to a sovereign state. When the PGW found it desirable to seize a facility, they would force that the facility be turned over to them regardless of any Polish resistance. That was the case with the seizure of Legnica in July 1945. The successors of the first PGW commander did not behave any better. In the period of increased Soviet supervision of Poland in the 1950s (till 1956) PGW staff was recruited as military advisors to the Polish Army, since they were best acquainted with all Polish matters.<sup>48</sup>

Among a number of issues related to the political importance of the PGW these can be distinguished: police tasks of the group, its propaganda role, legal aspects of its stationing, and the interference in the country's

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<sup>44</sup> Ibidem

<sup>45</sup> *Dokumenty i materiały...*, pp. 624, 626

<sup>46</sup> *Polska-ZSRR: struktury podległości. Dokumenty KC WKP(b) 1944-49* (Poland-USSR: Structures of Subordination. Documents of the KC WKP(b)), ed. by G. Bordiugow, A. Kochoński, A. Koseski, G. Matwiejew, A. Paczkowski, Warsaw 1995, pp. 161, 222; *Dokumenty i materiały...*, p. 621

<sup>47</sup> E. Nalepa, *Oficerowie Armii Radzieckiej w Wojsku Polskim 1943-1968*, (Soviet Army Officers in the Polish Army 1943-1968), Warsaw 1995, p. 35

<sup>48</sup> Ibidem, p. 129

political life. The most crucial political function of the PGW was supporting activities that were to preserve the existing system of government in Poland, the system controlled by the country's communists, completely dependent on the USSR. The most crucial aspect of the political role was the ability to intervene militarily if the USSR found changes in the Polish government undesired from its point of view. Police and propaganda activities were supplementing this role. The PGW was supposed to be able to act militarily against the Polish underground movement.

The political role of the PGW in the first years of its existence was stressed with the person in the chief command. One of the most important commanders of the Red Army, Marshal K. Rokossowski, just like Zhukov in Germany or Konev in Austria, took over the supervision of one of the seized territories. The fact that Rokossowski stayed in Poland proved Stalin did not feel like appointing him to a more serious post in Moscow, though four years later Rokossowski got his reward. His transfer to Warsaw was undoubtedly a promotion, since he took the command of a more numerous military force, which he very quickly enlarged even more. His designation on November 7, 1949 to be the Marshal and Defense Minister of Poland can be seen from two perspectives. One is that the political importance of the PGW decreased. Rokossowski was to continue long-year activities that were supposed to ensure the Polish Army would be loyal to the USSR, which was indicated already in 1950 in the new military oath. The PGW was not withdrawn from Poland however, its bases were kept in place and their capacity and military advantages could be used at any time. After four years in its command, Rokossowski as the creator of the group could use this structure best of all Soviet generals, in case that would be needed. Right until 1956 there was no such need, yet the PGW remained politically strong. When the Soviet delegation visited Warsaw in October 1956, Rokossowski together with the generals of the PGW was in the committee welcoming Khrushchev. Moreover, Stalin was aware of the propaganda advantage that came with the fact Rokossowski's father was Polish. This fact was used in the propaganda campaign explaining the "Polishness" of the new Polish Defense Minister. Stalin knew very well that the "Polishness" would not be inconvenient for the Soviet Union. Rokossowski proved it as a front commander with his inactivity during the Warsaw Uprising.

The large number and the organization of the PGW in many places and its activities in various parts of life were a serious problem of great political significance. The distribution list for the reports of the governmental representative to the PGW in Legnica can illustrate this, since still in January 1949 it contained eleven addressees, among them:

Industry Minister Hilary Minc, Deputy Prime Minister Władysław Gomułka, and Defense Minister Piotr Jaroszewicz. W. Gomułka was at the end of the first stage of his political career. The matters related to PGW stationing are likely to have been an additional reason for Stalin's decision to get rid of him. Gomułka, as opposed to Minc or Bierut himself, was much more firm in demanding that the Soviet Army respected Polish rights to former German property.

The Soviet military stationed in Poland was to fulfill its primary political role in controlling the territory of a state that was only formally independent from and allied with the USSR. This role was best illustrated in October 1956 when Soviet divisions left their positions and moved in the direction of Warsaw. Even before the PGW was created, Soviet military played a very important role in the pacification \*\*\* of the country, and most of all in destroying the structures of the Polish Underground State. With this they created convenient conditions for the small group of Polish communists to take over the government.<sup>49</sup> It must be stressed that the 64<sup>th</sup> Division of the NKVD was operating right until the end of 1946. The PGW, hundreds of thousands of soldiers strong, had its own police formation active between 1945 and 1947, the NKVD Rear Protection Force of the PGW, almost 3 thousand soldiers strong and commanded by General Rogatin who resided at the PGW Headquarters in Legnica. The MWD force also included the governmental communications force, 6,4 thousand soldiers strong, scattered around tens of towns, and remaining officially within the PGW structure.<sup>50</sup> Both the 64<sup>th</sup> Division and the NKVD forces of the PGW were closely related. Just two weeks after the PGW was created, Beria reported to Stalin: "*the duty of a representative [of the NKVD at the PGW – M.G.] is assigned to General Lieutenant Selivanovski, who at the same time is an advisor to the Polish MBP*".<sup>51</sup> The NKVD Rear Protection Force, placed mainly on former German

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<sup>49</sup> M. Golon, „Represje Armii Czerwonej i NKWD wobec polskiej konspiracji niepodległościowej w l. 1944-1946”, (Red Army and NKVD Repressions against the Polish Independence Conspiracy in the Years 1944-1946), p. 1, *Czasy Nowożytne*, vol. 1, 1996, pp. 75-110, part 2, *Czasy Nowożytne*, vol. II, Toruń 1997, pp. 107-136

<sup>50</sup> „NKVD i polskie podpole...”, op. cit., pp. 287-288, S. Kruglov's Report for Stalin of May 20, 1945; also, „NKVD i polskie podziemie” (NKVD and the Polish Underground Movement), ed. by A. Kastory, *Arkana* no 6 (12) 1996, Kraków 1996, pp. 123-124

<sup>51</sup> „Teczka specjalna J.W. Stalina. Raporty NKWD z Polski. 1944-1946” (The Special File of J. Stalin. NKVD Reports from Poland. 1944-1946), ed. by T. Cariewskaja, A. Chmielarz, A. Paczkowski, E. Rosowska, S. Rudnicki, Warsaw 1998, pp. 304-305, Beria's report of June 22, 1945

territories where the independence conspiracy was less active, played a lesser role in fighting it. The plans however were very ambitious, as laid out in a project designed against the Polish underground movement by General Rogatin and his Chief of Staff Colonel Tishayev. The project took into account the whole country, with those regions where larger PGW troops were not stationed, and suggested to assign ten mobile NKVD regiments to the Białystok, Lublin, Rzeszów, Warszawa, Łódź, Kielce and Bydgoszcz Voivodeships, and one battalion each to the Poznań, Kraków, Silesian and Gdańsk Voivodeships. The general command of the operations against underground groups and their destruction, as well as of the forces assigned to these tasks, was taken over by General Rogatin. Communication network was planned carrying information on the work against conspiracy from the Chief Advisor to the MBP and Soviet security instructors at voivodeship security offices. The project named a number of other very detailed tasks.<sup>52</sup> The project was abandoned probably because of the rising abilities of the UB and other Polish repressive formations. In October 1946 two PGW Rear Protection regiments were removed from Poland.<sup>53</sup> Even though the direct role of the Soviet military in fighting the Polish conspiracy ended with the withdrawal of the PGW Rear Protection forces, the political significance of the Soviet military was immense. For the society, the presence of the Soviet military itself was one of the most important reasons to give up open fight with the communist regime.

The PGW Political Board was constantly interested in the political situation in Poland and sent its own reports to Moscow on matters very distant from those related to "protecting transport routes". They would cover analysis of the situation in the territories where larger units of the PGW were not stationed, like the Łódź Voivodeship. Reports written by the Chief of the PGW Political Board, General A. Okorokov, were sent to the Main Political Board of the USSR Armed Forces, and from there directly to the Central Committee of the WKP(b). Another author of political analyses was a high-ranking PGW official, a member of the War Council of the group, General A. Russkikh. For instance, in November 1946 Okorokov wrote of the current political situation, including the situation inside the PPS. In his report he did not give a general account of the political situation in Poland, rather his observations and records of all events considered anti-Soviet. Representatives of the Soviet special services at the PGW analyzed social conditions and moods, e.g. they knew

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<sup>52</sup> CAW, KAR, call no. 1549, Discussion of the actions against Polish gangs – the Director of the PGW Rear Protection Force colonel Rogatin, Chief of Staff Colonel Tiszajew, no date, after June 25, 1946

<sup>53</sup> „Teczka specjalna...”, op. cit., p. 547, Kruglov's report, Oct. 1946

very well what was the approach of the Poles to the Coal Agreement of August 1945 which in fact had a character of a disguised war obligation \*\*\*. In March 1947 Okorokov wrote to M. Suslovov, the Director of the Foreign Policy Department of the WKP(b) Central Committee, that having compared the prices paid by the Swedes and the Soviets, Poles concluded “*the Polish-Russian friendship costs Poland 120 million dollars a year*”.<sup>54</sup> PGW reports were probably one of important sources of information about Poland to the central government of the USSR. Soviet units in most cities of the new territories and partially of the old territories were a good basis for gathering information.

Another aspect of the political importance of PGW stationing was a peculiar supplementation of the police activities of the group, namely selecting the citizens of the USSR and persons regarded as its citizens. The PGW organized a special camp in Wołów near Wrocław for the “USSR citizens” being brought there from all voivodeships. Among them were them were persons that “acquired” Soviet citizenship only as a result of Soviet conquests between 1939 and 1941, e.g. Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Estonians, and others. Some persons among tens of thousands of the “repatriates” had the right to the Polish citizenship through marriage. The “repatriation” sometimes covered Poles, too. Colonels Juzhkov and Antipenko commanded the PGW Repatriation Squad.<sup>55</sup> It was a part of PGW activities to arrest Polish citizens in the scope of Soviet security’s interest in relation to their earlier activity on the territories incorporated into the USSR. These people, through the prison in Legnica, ended up in camps in the USSR. That happened to an AK officer from the Vilnius region, Antoni Rymśa, who was arrested by the UB in the Łębork country and turned over to the Soviet authorities.<sup>56</sup> Legnica had a Soviet court martial, too.

One of the goals of PGW activities was to influence the Polish society ideologically. Many propaganda actions prove that. One of their goals was to convince the society of all the benefits coming from the cooperation with the USSR. All factual and alleged financial help of the USSR for Poland was made public. An important propaganda tool was PGW press.

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<sup>54</sup> *Polska-ZSRR: struktury...*, op. cit., p. 180, General A. Okorokov’s Report, March 19, 1947

<sup>55</sup> AAN, PGW AR, call no. 31; AAN, PGW AR, call no. 25, Report by the Legal Advisor of the Representation, Oct. 3, 1947; AAN, PGW AR, call no. 117, Report for the 3th quarter of 1952 and the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 1952; call nos. 75 and 89: Representation’s Correspondence regarding Repatriation

<sup>56</sup> AAN, PGW AR, call no. 25, Report by the Legal Advisor of the Representation, Oct. 3, 1947; J. Smykowski, *Opowiedział mi Max* (So told me Max), Legnica 1993

The group's daily "Wolność" ["Freedom"] published for Poles was the successor of Polish-language press published by the Red Army during the war. Most of its 25 thousand run was distributed among the Polish Army's political machine to achieve propaganda goals. In March 1947 Chief of the Political Board of the Red Army, General J. Shishkin, complained officially to Suslov that the 25 thousand copies distributed in the Polish Army, 20 thousand being free-of-charge (which Shishkin regarded as too little), were to become just 4,5 thousand. General J. Zarzycki of the Polish Army's GZP explained that PGW's daily had a higher run than Polish press distributed in the Polish Army.<sup>57</sup> "Wolność", as an illustrated daily, was published until 1955. A future member of the CPSU Central Committee in charge of Polish affairs in the 1980s, Peter Kostikov, co-edited the daily.

When evaluating the propaganda role of the Red Army, the great monument action had even more serious and lasting consequences than the press. Monuments were raised in the most exhibited places and became cult places where real merits were commemorated together with invented ones, like the liberation, and current loyalty to the USSR was shown. Apart from the initiatives of local communists (e.g. in Wieliczka) or Soviet commanders (e.g. in Toruń), a very important central initiative appeared in 1945, invented by General S. Shatilov, USSR Military Mission Chief in Poland. Its goal was to build gratitude monuments on a mass scale. PGW's role in the monument action was significant, since the presence of numerous troops gave an "incentive" to show gratitude to the "liberators". Rokossowski organized an action of confirming the projects.<sup>58</sup> Undoubtedly, without PGW presence the impressive over six hundred monuments would not have been raised, mainly in the first decade after the war. The monuments were on the one hand the symbols of subservience to the USSR, and on the other helped build a falsified image of the past. They also served as a justification for Soviet military presence in Poland. Attempts to destroy the tools of indoctrination were the reaction to this

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<sup>57</sup> *Polska-ZSSR: struktury...*, pp. 182-183, 219

<sup>58</sup> Read further in: M. Golon, „Symbole wdzięczności czy uległości? Pomniki wdzięczności Armii Czerwonej – przyczynek do dziejów propagandy komunistycznej w Polsce po drugiej wojnie światowej” (Symbols of gratitude or subservience? Gratitude Monuments of the Red Army – a Contribution to the Studies of Communist Propaganda in Poland after World War II), [in:] *Europa Orientalis. Polska i jej wschodni sąsiedzi od średniowiecza po współczesność. Studia i materiały ofiarowane prof. S. Alexandrowiczowi* (Europa Orientalis. Poland and its Eastern Neighbors from the Middle Ages to Present Times. Study Materials presented to Prof. S. Alexandrowicz), ed. by Z. Karpus, T. Kempa, D. Michaluk, Toruń 1996, pp. 601-618

propaganda violation. Among tens of attacks on the monuments in the first year after the war, one of the more notorious was the detonation of a large gratitude monument in the Center of Łódź in February 1946. The PGW War Council had unveiled the monument in November 1945.<sup>59</sup>

Trying to conceal the number of crimes committed by PGW soldiers was a significant propaganda issue. Soviet authorities were aware of the robberies, destruction, crime and other negative phenomena related to PGW stationing. The protests of Polish authorities, efforts to get compensation and other actions were very often being taken immediately after the offence occurred, PGW Headquarters in Legnica must have been informed of a large number of these offences therefore. In 1950 Soviet authorities came across an ingenious way of "solving" the problem. They concluded namely that all materials relating to the PGW should be destroyed. Practically, all these materials were related to damages done by the PGW. Soviet authorities that the government administration, the post, customs, railway and forest managers, as well as power plants, gas suppliers and other organizations were in the possession of such materials. They were labeled as posing the threat of being disclosed as military secrets and supplied to enemy.<sup>60</sup> These documents could have proven the occupational character of the PGW, its robberies, banditry and other undesirable phenomena. The demand to destroy the documents was merely an attempt to destroy the evidence of crime committed by PGW soldiers or units. The lack of the evidence left the Polish authorities with no argument when claiming the damages. Soviet demands were met with the opposition of the Polish authorities, since they violated Polish law and the rules by which institutions functioned. The technical aspect of the Soviet demand posed problems as well. In 1945 Soviet military was present in most counties, which meant over 200 institutions archives of which were covered by the file destruction plan. The postal administration had an even larger number of offices archives of which were covered by the Soviet demand. There is no doubt that many files that the Soviet authorities wanted to burn remained in the archives. There is evidence however that some types of files, like customs clearance files, were destroyed, and that many documents concerning the Soviet military "disappeared".

The political significance of PGW stationing meant that there was increased pressure towards economic transformation disadvantageous from the point of view of Polish interests. Only political dependence of Poland

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<sup>59</sup> „Teczka specjalna...”, pp. 447-450, General N. Sieliwanowski's Report, March 8, 1946

<sup>60</sup> AAN, PGW AR, call no. 65, Government Representative Colonel Kusznierek to the Council of Ministers, August 9, 1950

from the USSR could have led to economic agreements evidently disadvantageous for Poland. They were in fact extorted tribute to the occupant. In a 1946 underground report it was said, "*the Soviets have recently demanded that all Polish iron product export be directed to them. They are no longer satisfied with the 70 percent [they were getting so far – M.G.]. Upon a governmental order the Central Union of the Iron Industry discontinued negotiations of iron product supplies with Western European companies even though their offers are much more profitable than Soviet ones*".<sup>61</sup>

When discussing the political importance of the PGW in the Stalinist years, special attention must be paid to the last months of that period. The year 1956 was a significant one for the group for two reasons. One was the interrupted military intervention, the other concluding the agreement on its stationing. The intervention resulted from the political changes in Poland, too far-fetched in the view of the Soviet authorities. The anxiety of the Soviet Communist Party over the direction of these changes, and most of all over the control of Poland, made Marshal G. Zhukov announce an alert for the PGW in October 1956, and on October 19 some of its units left for Warsaw. Two divisions (tank and mobile ones) left the bases in Świętoszów, Strachów, and Borne Sulinowo, and stopped some 100 kilometers away from the capital. The communications battalion went right next to the city borders. At the same time a Soviet delegation with Khrushchev came on a visit to Warsaw. Rokossowski and PGW commanders were awaiting it at the airport. The analogy to the later fate of Hungary is so great that there is no doubt the intervention would have been carried out if not for Khrushchev's belief lasting for a few days that there was and would be no counter-revolution.<sup>62</sup> The decision made by him in the evening of October 19 to temporarily stop the march of the Soviet military interrupted the on-going military intervention of the PGW. At that time Soviet military movements were observed in the DDR, the Eastern border and on the Baltic. A final decision to give up the intervention was reached by the Soviet Communist Party Central Committee only on October 23, 1956. On the same day Khrushchev finally gave in to Gomułka's pleas and ordered the units back to their bases. It is disputed what the reasons were for the call-off of the intervention in progress.

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<sup>61</sup> *Zrzeszenie „Wolność i Niezawisłość” w dokumentach* (The „Freedom and Independence” Association in the Documents), Wrocław 1997, vol. 2, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 447

<sup>62</sup> K. Persak, „Kryzys stosunków polsko-radzieckich 1956, Polska 1944/45-1989”, (The 1956 Crisis in Polish-Soviet Relations, Poland 1944 and 1945 to 1989), vol. 3, Warsaw 1997, pp. 19-44

Usually, restrained approach of the Chinese Communist Party is quoted as the primary reason. Also brought up are the crisis in Hungary and Gomułka's convincing gestures; even though he had Rokossowski sacked from the PZPR Political Bureau, he restated the necessity for Soviet military's stationing in Poland during a rally in Warsaw.<sup>63</sup> Until the 1980s Poland was never under such a threat of a military operation of the Soviet military. Khrushchev's decisions were executed directly by PGW commander, General K. Galicki, who was considered effective enough to have kept his job right till 1958.

A side effect of the march of tens of thousands of PGW soldiers towards Warsaw were serious financial losses caused by the damage to road infrastructure which amounted to 36 million zlotys and were never covered by the PGW.<sup>64</sup> The overcoming of the October crisis did not mean a return to the previous state. Soviet military may have returned to the bases, but the demonstration of power had serious political consequences, since moves to make the political system more liberal were overshadowed by the intervention. It helped Gomułka take a tougher political course and abandon or limit parts of the so-called October achievements.

There was one positive consequence of the October. W. Gomułka could reenter the attempts initiated in the 1940s to legally regulate the status of PGW stationing in Poland, which was done in December 1956. The treaty and agreements related to it were only a partial success of Poland. The most important drawback was the lack of the deadline for Soviet military's stationing. It was just a relative success that the treaty stated the stationing was temporary. An advantage of the treaty, even though the USSR broke parts of its stipulations, was the legal regulation of the Soviet stationing. From the legal viewpoint, the treaty ended the occupation. Undoubtedly, the document restricted PGW actions violating Polish interests. Decreased financial losses also had their significance, since the PGW started to participate in the costs of their stay to a larger degree than before.

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<sup>63</sup> K. Persak, op. cit., pp. 39-41, A. Werblan, *W. Gomułka a ugrupowania w partii w październiku 1956, Polska 1944/45-1989* (W. Gomułka and Groups within the Part in October 1956, Poland 1944 and 1945 to 1989). Study materials, vol. 3, Warsaw 1997, p. 87

<sup>64</sup> AAN, KC PZPR, call no. 2631, Report of the Activities of the PRL Government Representative and the Polish Delegation to the Polish-Soviet Committee for May 1957 to Dec. 31, 1965, p. 9