

## Article 13

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### Dr Grzegorz Mazur, The ZWZ-AK Bureau of Information and Propaganda

Department VI of the Union for Armed Struggle and later Home Army (ZWZ-AK) Headquarters included the Bureau of Information and Propaganda (BIP), originally called the Department of Political Propaganda or simply the Political Department. It had no equivalent in the Polish Army before the war, but it nevertheless played a very important role in raising morale and influencing attitudes among the soldiers of the underground movement as well as those of the Polish community. Through the introduction of propaganda the soldiers of the ZWZ-AK could be integrated into a single underground army. The BIP was headed in consecutive order by: Major Tadeusz Kruk-Strzelecki, from October 1939; Lieutenant Colonel Jan Rzepecki, from October 1940, and from October 1944 to January 1945 by Captain Kazimierz Moczarski. The first deputies were Hipolit Niepokulczycki, from October 1939 to the end of 1940, and Tadeusz Kobylanski, from April 1940 to late into the summer of that year. Department VI was headed by Major Tadeusz Wardejn-Zagórski, who from October 1940 was also a deputy head of the BIP; among other things he oversaw the issuing of major ZWZ-AK publications *Biuletyn Informacyjny* and *Wiadomości Polski*. The weekly *Biuletyn Informacyjny*, edited by Aleksander Kaminski, was the main channel through which the ZWZ-AK HQ put out its programme and by 1944 it had a circulation of 42-43,000. The target reader was the ordinary AK soldier, and for this reason HQ recommended to have *Biuletyn Informacyjny* articles reprinted in provincial underground papers that appeared throughout occupied Poland. The fortnightly *Wiadomości Polski*, edited by Witold Gielzynski and Tadeusz Manteuffel, concerned current political affairs and was directed mainly at the AK commanders as well as members of the intelligentsia associated with the resistance movement. Its highest circulation reached 10,000 copies in 1944. These two newspapers gave ZWZ-AK propaganda a uniform character. A similar role was played by the paper *Agencja Prasowa*, which was reprinted in BIP publications throughout the country (the main ones included: the Krakow *Malopolski Biuletyn Informacyjny*, the Lwów *Biuletyn Ziemi Czerwieskiej*, the Łódź *Biuletyn Kujawski*, the Wilno *Niepodległosc*, the Rzeszów *Na Posterunku* and the Nowogród region's *Swit Polski*). Moreover, the department issued thousands of leaflets, brochures and other forms of printed material. In the summer of 1944 the department included approximately 40 staff members.

In 1941 diversionary propaganda in the German language was begun in Operation 'N'. Its objective was to lower German morale and the publications were frequently presented as the work of German opposition groups that did not in fact exist. The whole concept, the setting up and the running of the operation was the responsibility of Lieutenant Tadeusz Zencykowski, an outstanding specialist in the field of propaganda. Although some time between the end of 1941 and beginning of 1942 *Gestapo* experts correctly identified the true publishers to be members of the ZWZ, this fact was not generally known among the ordinary German soldiers and civilians, who were the operation's actual target readers. By the spring of 1944 approximately a million copies of various German language propaganda material were published. The literature was not only distributed in Polish territories but also throughout Germany and as far as the German-Soviet frontline. It was planted in such ways so as to mask its Polish origin and convince the Germans that it was the work of their compatriots. This literature played an important role in undermining morale among German soldiers, administration officials in occupied territories and Third Reich civilians.

In the spring of 1942 a new department codenamed 'Rój' (Swarm) was founded with the mission to prepare for the making of propaganda during the planned uprising. This included the training of filmmakers, photographers, radio operators, journalists, writers and artists to be able to operate in fighting conditions. The necessary equipment, such as radio transmitters and microphones, was accumulated and in the meantime camera operators and photographers were assigned to partisan detachments to record their activities.

The 'Antyk' department (alternatively known under the code name 'R'), which was formed at the end of 1943, was responsible for anti-Communist propaganda and published two fortnightly papers *Wolność Robotnika* (Workers' Freedom) and *Głos Ludu* (The People's Voice) as well as various leaflets. It was headed by Tadeusz Żenczykowski, who also represented the AK in the Social Anti-Communist Committee (SKA), which was set up by the Homeland Political Representation on 26<sup>th</sup> October 1943 and headed by the Polish Socialist Party activist Franciszek Białas. SKA coordinated anti-Communist propaganda activity among the main political groups and major institutions of the underground movement. In December 1943 and over the first five months of 1944 it published over 400,000 copies of brochures, leaflets and other forms of printed literature. In the summer of 1944 the three departments under Żenczykowski's charge ('N', 'Rój' and 'R') comprised some 150 members.

The Secret Military Printing Works (TWZW), set up and run by Jerzy Rutkowski, was another department of the BIP at the ZWZ-AK HQ whose purpose was the printing of underground literature in Warsaw. At the start of 1944 the TWZW included several very well concealed printing houses, a zincography unit, a bookbinder's workshop and 50 fulltime employees. Between the end of 1943 and the start of 1944 its monthly output was on average: 248,500 periodicals, 65,500 pamphlets and 120,000 leaflets. In the spring of 1944 output fell on account of some of the printing houses being uncovered by the Germans. Throughout its existence the TWZW produced well over 10 million copies of underground newspapers, over a million brochures, instruction pamphlets and other bound literature, around a million leaflets and around a million copies of German language literature as part of Operation 'N'. Its publications were distributed throughout the country (though there were also many other BIP newspapers, brochures and leaflets in circulation beyond Warsaw) and reached thousands of people. However, it is impossible to determine the exact underground press output and the above figures are only estimates.

Another function of the BIP was to gather political information. The man who founded (in autumn 1939) and first headed the Information Department was Major Jerzy Makowiecki, who was also a deputy commander of the BIP. After his tragic death on 13<sup>th</sup> April 1944 the post of department head was taken over by Aleksander Gieysztor. The Information Department was a large underground research institute dealing with approximately 100 issues concerning, among other things, social, economic, cultural and ethnic affairs as well as special subjects in work commissioned by the BIP head or his superiors. It produced extensive reports that kept the ZWZ-AK HQ as well as the Polish London based Government-in-Exile informed on the general situation in occupied Poland. The reports covered all aspects of life apart from those that were of a purely military nature, for they were the concern of the ZWZ-AK intelligence and counterintelligence services.

At the ZWZ-AK HQ level the BIP also included the Editorial Department of Professional Military Literature, which was headed by Colonel Mieczysław Biernacki and published two military periodicals: *Insurekcja* and *Żołnierz Polski*. The target readers were junior officers of the underground army who were thus educated and instructed in military history as well as the latest developments on the fronts. The Department of the Military History Office, headed by Dr Stanisław Płoski, gathered material for future post-war research into military history. The remaining BIP departments at HQ level played a more supplementary role. Among these one should mention the administration department, which allowed the BIP to function efficiently and whose women couriers operated not only throughout Warsaw but also the whole of the *General-Gouvernement*, reaching places hundreds of kilometres away. In July 1944 the Distribution

Department included 18 permanent female staff members and more or less as many employed on a temporary basis. It regularly delivered the underground press to all ZWZ-AK districts within the *General-Gouvernement*, and from 1943 also to districts beyond its borders, thus covering the entire territory of pre-war Poland. The department was first headed by Major Adam Jastrzebski and then by Wanda Kraszewska-Ancerewicz. The great advantage of the underground distribution network was that single copies passed through the hands of many people and thus even individually had great effects on raising morale in Polish society.

Apart from the HQ level departments, the BIP also had cells in the various ZWZ-AK districts and areas. The purpose of these cells was to realise the instructions of the BIP HQ by distributing its press as well as publishing and distributing their own literature. At the local level propaganda was not only spread the means of newspapers, brochures or leaflets, but also by word of mouth. There were in all 250 local BIP publications. Because the local BIP cells had their own distribution networks, their publications had in a sense the farthest reaching readership. All in all the whole BIP organization involved well over 10,000 people and it needs to be stressed that these included many outstanding members of Poland's post-war intelligentsia: academics, lawyers, writers and others.

The Bureau of Information and Propaganda's publications, like the action to include various secret groups into the underground army, worked to integrate the rank and file of the ZWZ-AK as well as the Polish community in which the resistance movement existed. In doing so they focused all attention on the goal of liberating the nation, which overrode less important political differences. The principal message constantly stressed by BIP propaganda was that Poland's greatest enemy was Germany. Nonetheless, the Soviet threat to Poland's eastern territories and indeed its very independence and sovereignty was implied by describing the USSR as 'the ally of our allies'. The Polish Communists (the Polish Workers' Party) were correctly presented as the vanguard of the Soviet political machine, whose aim was to subjugate Poland. At the same time there was a great deal of trust in the West, which the BIP believed would ultimately defeat Germany and help rebuild Poland. With regard to internal politics the BIP remained loyal to the Polish Government-in-Exile as the only authority with a legal mandate over the Polish people. A great deal of emphasis was put on the unity of the underground army and Polish society in general in their loyalty towards this government. That was why the BIP always supported the stance of the Government-in-Exile, its Commander-in-Chief as well as the high command of the AK in occupied Poland. Though one cannot measure the influence of BIP propaganda in general, in this single respect one can say that the BIP had a fundamental impact on the Polish population's stance towards the invaders during the war, especially the Germans, as well as its united support of the Polish Republic's lawful authorities.

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The article was possible and appears thanks to the generosity of  
the de Brzezie Lanckoronski Foundation