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HISTORY OF ORZYSZ CONSPIRACY

*The turn of the forties and fifties is a period of renewed activity of the various groups and underground organisations. One of them was the Democratic Union of Struggle for Independence – DZWON (the abbreviation of the Polish full name “**D**emokratyczny **Z**wiązek **W**alki **O** **N**iepodległość”, in English ‘The Bell’) - the organisation that operated in the period from May 1951 to March 1952. The founder and leader of the organisation was Władysław Świacki, who had experience in fighting the Nazis as well as in the underground working.*

The political programme of the DZWON organisation based on commonly taken into consideration by society in those days the possibility of the outbreak of World War III, which at the same time would create the possibility of taking the armed struggle and finally the overthrow of the communist regime depending on the Soviet Union. The internal structure of the organisation was closely adjusted to the underground conditions. Władysław Świacki created the ternary system, which was to guarantee the safety of individuals, even in the case of arrests.

In the period from May 1951 to February 1952, the organisation was able to embrace with its range the part of Olsztyn and Białystok voivodships. The communist authorities quickly got on the trail of the organisation. The first arrests took place in late January and February 1952. Until April of that year dozens of people were arrested. After the brutal interrogation a great number of members of the organisation were sentenced to more than ten years in prison.

Key words: *political and armed underground, Democratic Union of Struggle for Independence of 1951-1952, DZWON, conspiracy*

INTRODUCTION

The current state of knowledge about the liberation underground in Poland after the World War II still has large gaps and needs to be supplemented. The turn of the forties

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and fifties is a period of renewed activity of the various groups and underground organisations, which included among others DZWON – the Democratic Union of Struggle for Independence. Available information on the DZWON is very poor. So far only one publication on this issue has appeared¹. This work needs to be completed because of the included inaccuracies, caused most probably due to the author's lack of access to entire documentation. After typing the name of the organisation in a search engine, on the website of the Public Information Bulletin of IPN one will receive fragmentary information about one of the association members - Witold Wagner².

DZWON – the organisation that existed from May 1951 until March 1952. The main objective of its activity was to fight the communist regime. The name was adopted from the radio signal of a striking bell called 'Freedom' of the radio station in West Germany. That signal was used by the Radio Free Europe. The full name of the organisation was devised and adjusted precisely to the abbreviation of DZWON (which means 'the bell' in English)³.

The founder and leader of the organisation was Władysław Świacki, who had experience in fighting the Nazis, as well as the underground working⁴. Most likely in April 1951, he took the first steps aiming to establish the organisation called DZWON.

1. THE PROGRAMME OF THE ORGANISATION

The political programme of the DZWON organisation based on commonly taken into consideration by society in those days the possibility of the outbreak of World War III, which at the same time would create the possibility of taking the armed struggle and finally the overthrow of the communist dictatorship.

Therefore, the programme of the organisation as its main objective posed:

- a) The overthrow of the ruling regime and seizing power after the outbreak of World War III. Means leading to accomplishing the objective was to be the collection, preservation and storage of firearms as well as recruiting and training members of the organisation throughout the country.
- b) The active operation of the organisation by:
 - carrying out the recognition of the current political and economic situation, mood of the population,

¹ W. Brenda, *Z dziejów Demokratycznego Związku Walki o Niepodległość w województwie olsztyńskim (1951 - 1952)*, [in:] *Polska. Walka, opozycja, niepodległość Studia z dziejów II RP, Polskiego Państwa Podziemnego i PRL* edited by: A. Baran, Sandomierz 2000 r., pp. 174-181.

² [online] [dostęp: 5.05.2010]. Dostępny w Internecie: <http://katalog.bip.ipn.gov.pl/showDetails.do?idx=W&katalogId=4&subpageKatalogId=4&pageNo=1&nameId=3590&osobaId=18285&>.

³ Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu w Białymstoku (IPN Bi), sygn. 019/52/1, Charakterystyka nr 17 nielegalnej organizacji politycznej p. n. Demokratyczny Związek Walki o Niepodległość „Dzwon” z 28 XII 1976 r., pp. 1.

⁴ Świacki Władysław – born on 17th November, 1900 in Pałuta, the powiat of Suwałki, during World War II was an active participant of the Association of Armed Struggle and the Home Army, where he performed duties of the head of intelligence in the staff of the district, the aide-de-camp of the District Headquarters in the powiat of Grajewo. After a battle fought against the Germans (fought as a part of the action 'Storm') on the Red Marsh on 8-9th September 1944, he was arrested and taken to forced labour deeply into Germany. In late 1945 he returned to Poland and settled in Elk. He belonged to the PPS and the Communist Party, where he was expelled from in 1951 as an hostile character.

- collecting data on the officers of the Office of Public Security, the Civic Militia, party and state activists (the information was to be used after taking power),
 - drawing up lists of employees of the security bodies and party activists in order to use them in radio broadcasts and foreign publications.
- c) The use of various forms of intimidation (anonymous letters, physical terror) against people participating actively in the ongoing political transformations in the country.
- d) The establishment of co-operation with guerrilla groups acting in the vicinity of Łomża and Grajewo.
- e) The dissemination of information among society about the brevity of the ruling power, the impending conflict on a global scale and the impending liberation of Poland from Soviet occupation⁵.

The activity of the organisation was intended to be extended over the whole country.

2. THE STRUCTURE AND PERSONNEL OF THE ORGANISATION

The internal structure of the organisation was closely adjusted to the underground conditions. Władysław Świacki created the ternary system, which would guarantee the safety of individuals, even in the case of arrests.

The threesomes consisted of three-person teams, members of which were scheduled for the following positions:

- a chairman (a commander),
- a deputy chairman (deputy commander),
- a secretary (an aide-de-camp).

What is more, at each threesome was to be ‘an liaison officer – secret agent’, whose task was to ensure the safety of members of the threesome.

At the head of the organisation was to be the national threesome (or central management) – for the period of the activity it did not come into existence. Further structure was closely aligned with the administrative division of the country:

- voivodship threesomes,
- powiat threesomes,
- town threesomes,
- district threesomes,
- municipal threesomes,
- council threesomes⁶.

Waldemar Brenda writes about the existence of so-called ‘the leading threesome’ (or the General Headquarters), whose members were to be Władysław Świacki

⁵ IPN Bi, sygn. 019/52/1, Charakterystyka nr 17 nielegalnej organizacji politycznej p. n. Demokratyczny Związek Walki o Niepodległość „Dzwon” z 28 XII 1976 r., pp. 2-3.

⁶ Ibidem, pp. 5.

and Władysław Sosnowski. In fact, the General Headquarters did not exist, but among the members of the organisation this term was actually used, because it raised the authority of the union. However, Włodzimierz Sosnowski (not Władysław) was the chairman of the powiat threesome in Grajewo. In fact, Świacki performed duties of the voivodship inspector and individually the function of the leader at the same time⁷.

The basic requirement for prospective members was the completion of the age of 25. This would lead to acceptance of people with formed political views. In addition, each new member was required to take an oath reading as follows:

'I swear to Almighty God the One in the Holy Trinity that by joining the ranks of the Democratic Union of Struggle for Independence I will keep secret as closely as possible all the matters concerning the union, I will perform all orders and regulations of the union authorities diligently and zealously, I will fight for Polish Independence with the deny of myself, until the loss of my life, so help me God'⁸.

The functioning of various structures was strictly centralised. There was in force the principle of central subordination and implementing all the commands and orders issued by higher-rank threesomes to lower-rank ones. The leader of the organisation, Władysław Świacki, who was fulfilling the function of a voivodship inspector, gave orders personally only to chairmen of individual threesomes. This resulted in the lack of knowledge of their mutual existence, the actual size of the organisation and, to a certain degree, provided them the security.

In the period from May 1951 to February 1952, the organisation managed to extend its reach in the voivodship of Białystok the following poviats: Ełcki, Augustowski, Grajewski and the city of Białystok, Elk, as well as municipalities of Radziłów and Juchy. Whereas, in the province of Olsztyn the structure of the organisation existed in the Piski powiat and in Olsztyn.

The created threesomes were filled personally as follows⁹:

No.	Name	Function performed	Distribution
1.	Świacki Władysław	Voivodship inspector	Białystok
2.	Kownacki Leon ¹⁰	Chairman	The town threesome of Białystok
		Deputy chairman	
		Secretary	
3.	Piotrowski Klemens ¹¹	Chairman	The town threesome

⁷ Ultimately Świacki Władysław intended to take on a post in 'the national threesome'.

⁸ IPN Bi, sygn. 019/52/1, Charakterystyka nr 17 nielegalnej organizacji politycznej p. n. Demokratyczny Związek Walki o Niepodległość „Dzwon” z 28 XII 1976 r., pp. 4.

⁹ Ibidem, pp. 5.

¹⁰ Kownacki Leon – born in 1911 in Downary, the powiat of Mońki, of secondary education. In 1939, a non-commissioned officer of the military police KOP on the eastern border, a member of AK (the Home Army) – a team leader.

¹¹ Piotrowski Klemens – born in 1901 in Liszkowo, the powiat of Wyżysk, of elementary education. A participant of the Polish campaign of 1939, a participant of battles on the Italian front.

No.	Name	Function performed	Distribution
		Deputy chairman	
		Secretary	
4.	Pawlik Piotr ¹²	Chairman	
5.	Siennicki Józef ¹³	Deputy chairman	The poviats threesome of Elk
6.	Borawski Stanisław ¹⁴	Secretary	
7.	Sosnowski Włodzimierz ¹⁵	Chairman	
		Deputy chairman	The poviats threesome of Grajewo
		Secretary	
8.	Karwowski Wojciech ¹⁶	Chairman	
		Deputy chairman	The poviats threesome of Augustów
		Secretary	
9.	Berner Piotr ¹⁷	Chairman	
10.	Pawlisz Stefan ¹⁸	Deputy chairman	The municipal threesome of Jucha
11.	Waniewski Tadeusz ¹⁹	Secretary	
12.	Wysocki Franciszek ²⁰	Liaison officer –secret agent	

¹² Pawlik Piotr – born in 1903 in Ciszewo, the poviats of Grajewo, completed 7 grades of primary school. In May 1944, deported to a concentration camp in Grossrosen, then Dachau.

¹³ Siennicki Józef – born in 1920 in Siennica, the municipality of Czyżew, of elementary education. A warehouseman in GS „*Samopomoc Chłopska*” (‘*Peasants’ Mutual Aid Society*’) in Elk.

¹⁴ Borawski Stanisław – born in 1901 in Rakowo, the poviats of Grajewo, completed 4 grades of primary school.

¹⁵ Sosnowski Włodzimierz – born in 1883 in Tylwica, the poviats of Białystok, of elementary education. In 1943 he was arrested for belonging to the Association of Polish Uprisings and imprisoned in a concentration camp in Studhoff.

¹⁶ Karwowski Wojciech – born in 1903 in Downary, the poviats of Białystok, completed 5 grades of primary school. A glazier by profession.

¹⁷ Berner Piotr – born in 1908 in Wólka Karnowska, the poviats of Grajewo, completed 6 grades of primary school. A member of the Home Army - a team leader, in the years 1944 - 1945 the Polish Army soldier, exempted from military service in the rank of sergeant.

¹⁸ Pawlisz Stefan – born in 1902 in Siedlkiska, the municipality of Przemyśl, of elementary education. A member of the ZSL (Peasant’s Party).

¹⁹ Waniewski Tadeusz – born in 1918 in Przytuły, the poviats of Łomża, of elementary education. A soldier of the II Corps of General Władysław Anders.

²⁰ Wysocki Franciszek – born in 1918 in the poviats of Sokółka, of elementary education. A soldier of the Home Army, after the war he joined the Civic Militia, where he deserted from.

No.	Name	Function performed	Distribution
13.	Zieliński Jan ²¹	Chairman	The municipal threesome of Radziłów
		Deputy chairman	
		Secretary	
14.	Lewiński Zdzisław ²²	Chairman	The voivodship threesome of Olsztyn
		Deputy chairman	
		Secretary	
15.	Świacki Henryk ²³	Chairman	The poviat threesome of Pisz
		Deputy chairman	
		Secretary	

As one can see, only two threesomes were able to be completed (the poviat of Elk and the municipal of Jucha ones). It is not impossible that there were other threesomes which managed to avoid unmasking. This list above may be incomplete. It was written as the result of investigations carried out against the DZWON organisation and was drawn in the characteristics of No. 17, written on 18th December 1976.

3. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNION

The list above evidences that Henryk Świacki (a son of the founder of the union) held a position of a chairman of the poviat threesome in the poviat of Pisz. This is not consistent with results of the investigation against the second group of the same organisation, which was headed by Henryk Świacki. He began to build structures of an underground organisation at the same time as his father did. Together with Ryszard Skwarski in late April and May 1951 he decided to set up an organisation aiming at fighting the communist dictatorship²⁴. After that decision, they recruited two people to the organisation: Mieczysław Zieliński and Henryk Grad. The new members took an oath of a content modelled on the oath of the Home Army:

*'In the face of the Lord Almighty God, the one in the Holy Trinity, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Queen of the Polish Crown, I swear fidelity and devotion to the cause of the Polish independence. I will fight until the devotion of my life, so help me God and holy passion of him'*²⁵. The newly-formed organisation did not adopt a name and the internal structure was to be founded on creating teams on the basis of a system practiced in the

²¹ Zieliński Jan – born in 1920 in Zakrzewo, the municipality of Radziłów, completed 5 grades of primary school. The Home Army soldier.

²² Lewiński Zdzisław – born in 1900 in Warsaw, of higher education. A participant of the Polish campaign in 1939 in the rank of reserve second lieutenant, he fought near Ciechanów, took part in the defense of Modlin.

²³ Świacki Henryk – born in 1922 in Bogusze near Grajewo, of elementary education. A son of Władysław Świacki. A member of the Home Army in the unit of "Kedyw", in the group of "Orzeł" ('Eagle').

²⁴ IPN Białystok, sygn. IPN Bi 0090/120/1/d, Charakterystyka przestępczej działalności (brak daty), k. 79.

²⁵ IPN Białystok, sygn. IPN Bi 0090/120/3/d, Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Grada Henryka z 20 II 1952 r., k. 154.

Home Army. At the end of May Świacki began making efforts to establish contacts with underground organisations, where he could receive guidance on future activity. In July, Henryk Świacki met his father and learned about founded by him the DZWON organisation. As a result of that conversation Świacki Henryk made a decision about a reorganisation following the pattern of the structure functioning in his father's union²⁶. In late July and August he called a meeting of members and presented the new organisational structure. They also adopted the name of DZWON, carried out the division of functions and identified key tasks:

- recruiting new members,
- acquiring weapons.

High activity of the members led soon to the development of the Henryk Świacki's organisation and gaining a certain quantity of arms and ammunition. In September 1951 the leaders of both organisations met again and agreed that the son's organisation will be subjected to the General Headquarters of DZWON (i.e. to Władysław Świacki) and will bear its name. Also the text of the oath taken by newly joining members was standardised – throughout the organisation the content entered by Władysław Świacki was to be applied.

Based on the documentation of inquiry, we can conclude that Henryk Świacki's group consisted of the following members:

No.	Name	Function performed	Distribution
1.	Świacki Henryk	Chairman	The poviat threesome of Orzysz
2.	Zieliński Mieczysław ²⁷	Deputy chairman	
3.	Sosnowski Witold ²⁸	Secretary	
4.	Grad Henryk ²⁹	Chairman	The district threesome (later municipal one) of Orzysz
5.	Wiśniewski Władysław ³⁰	Inspector in poviats of Pisz, Szczytno, Giżycko	
6.	Snarski Edward ³¹	Chairman	The district threesome of Orzysz

²⁶ IPN Białystok, sygn. IPN Bi 0090/120/1/d, Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Świackiego Henryka z 26 II 1952 r., k. 149.

²⁷ Zieliński Mieczysław – born in 1922 in Brześć on the Bug, completed 6 grades of primary school. During the occupation he was on forced labour in the area of Mrągowo.

²⁸ Sosnowski Witold – born in 1930 in Bołędzin, in the voivodship of Wileńskie, completed 3 grades of primary school. A repatriate, employed at the railway station in Orzysz.

²⁹ Grad Henryk – born in 1929 in Poniatowa, the poviat of Łuck, completed 4 grades of primary school. The head of the Centre of Engineering in Orzysz.

³⁰ Wiśniewski Władysław – born in 1900 in Rzeżeta, the poviat of Włocławek, completed 2 grades of primary school. In the years 1920 - 1921 he served in the 14th Infantry Regiment.

These people knew each other and met at the gatherings that were held alternately at places of each of them. During these meetings, they listened to foreign radio programmes broadcasted in Polish by the BBC, the Radio Free Europe and the Voice of America³². In addition, Henryk Świacki conducted combat training, explained the principles of stopping cars and trains, rules of handling weapons, taught military drill in nearby forests³³.

We have no information about the positions, which occupied the other persons retained as a result of that investigation:

- Ryszard Skwarski,
- Edmund Grad,
- Mieczysław Roszkowski,
- Józef Wasilewski,
- Adam Makowiecki,
- Tadeusz Rytałowski,
- Piotr Roch,
- Witold Wagner,
- Edmund Kopańczyk,
- Stanisław Mikołajczak.

Undoubtedly, this list is to a large degree not complete, and the range of the organisation was much greater. Witold Sosnowski was regarded as the most active person and from his information it appears that he recruited one person from Warsaw and organized the following threesomes:

- 1 threesome in the village of Pianki, the municipality of Orzysz,
- 2 or 3 threesomes in the village of Mikosze (originally Mikosy), the municipality of Pisz,
- 8 threesomes in the town of Orzysz.

Unfortunately, we do not have accurate data about these threesomes (one cannot exclude the possibility that they have not been exposed).

The town of Orzysz became a place of exceptional activity for members of the Association. Evidence of that is the above results of Sosnowski's operations and Henryk Świacki's decision of dividing the town of Orzysz into three districts. Edward Snarski and Henryk Grad presided over them (the second one due to the lack of results in the recruitment was transferred to field work). Besides the above mentioned eight threesomes, Henryk Świacki led to the recruitment of Bronisław Iwicki – a member of ORMO in Orzysz, who performed in the Union the role of the informer. Thanks to him

³¹ Snarski Edward – born in 1930 in Ostar, the powiat of Augustów, completed 4 grades of primary school. A farmer.

³² IPN Bi, sygn. 0090/120/2/d, Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Sosnowskiego Witolda z 22 II 1952 r. k. 59.

³³ IPN Bi, sygn. 0090/120/1/d, Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Świackiego Henryka z 26 II 1952 r., k. 153.

Świacki had information about the personnel of the police station (MO) in Orzysz, its armament and operational plans. Acquired information in December brought about the decision of the police station commander's recruitment³⁴.

There was also a group of people only partially related to the organisation – it was formed by not recruited persons, having information about the activity of the Union, they did not inform authorities of this fact, often co-operated with DZWON and were treated by the Union as its 'regular' members:

- Bronisław Iwicki,
- Jan Brozio,
- Stefania Pośpieszyńska,
- Lucjan Zapert,
- Antoni Burgraf,
- Mieczysław Truszkowski,
- Mieczysław Wagner,
- Ryszard Rzakiewicz,
- Zygmunt Wagner,
- Władysław Junik,
- Eugeniusz Parda,
- Mieczysław Wojciechowski,
- Antoni Dolecki,
- Otto Byczek,
- Piotr Chocha,
- Henryk Kościelecki.

4. THE ACTIVITY OF THE ORGANISATION

In the period of the DZWON Union activity in the Białystok region there were armed organisations operating in the underground. The very wooded and sparsely urbanised area favoured them, becoming a mainstay for soldiers and activists who did not want to lay down arms. In the discussed period there were operating guerrilla groups, among others: 'Bruzda's'³⁵ (the organisation was particularly active within the poviats of Grajewo and Łomża), 'Blady's' – 'Poręba's'³⁶ and 'Lis's'³⁷. Both Władysław and Henryk

³⁴ IPN Bi, sygn. 0090/120/1/d, Charakterystyka przestępczej działalności (brak daty), k. 80.

³⁵ Jan Tabortowski - of a pseudonym 'Bruzda' in AK and AKO, 'Tabor' - in the WiN (born on October 16th, 1906 in Nowogródek, died. on August 23rd, 1954 in Przytuły) – a major of the Polish Army, a soldier of the AK, AKO and WiN, an inspector of III Łomża and IV Suwalski AK inspectorates, a district president of the WiN. See: S. Poleszak, *Jeden z wyklętych. Major Jan Tabortowski. „Bruzda”*, Warszawa 1998.

³⁶ Jan Sadowski („Blady”) oraz Piotr Burdyn („Poręba”, „Kabel”, „Edward”, „Mroźny”), the troop under their leadership operated on the territory of today's Suwalszczyzna in the years of 1949-1954., See: K. Pasiuk: *Ostatni „leśni” Suwalszczyzny. Oddział „Blatego” – Burdyna*, Sejny 2002.

³⁷ Antoni Kwiedorowicz (actually Antanas Kvedaravičius) nicknamed. 'Lis', Stryjek ' - a son of Adam, Lithuanian, born in 1916. He operated in the national Lithuanian guerrilla troops, where he acted under the pseudonym 'Łape' (a fox) or 'Šeškas' (a coward). In 1946 a unit of 'Rymvidas' came on

Świacki tried to contact the guerrillas, particularly the group that was commanded by Jan Tabortowski nicknamed 'Bruzda', who Władysław Świacki knew from the period of joint activity in the Home Army (AK) (he served as a district supervisor in the rank of major). The fact of that acquaintance, as well as the contact with that underground organisation, raised the prestige of DZWON and was used in conducting the recruitment of new members. For this purpose, Henryk Świacki met his friend from the times of occupation - Jan Zieliński and he learnt that Władysław Świacki was maintaining contacts with 'Bruzda' (they were to meet in the Zieliński's apartment) and about his problems related to the lack of ammunition. Świacki informed Zieliński about his organisation and readiness to come to the partisans' help. In July 1951 Henryk Świacki met his father and obtained information about his dealings with the 'Bruzda' (during the investigation Władysław Świacki confirmed this information, and subsequently withdrew it, saying that he had only wanted to contact him³⁸).

Unfortunately we do not have any information about more serious activity of DZWON founded by Władysław Świacki. However, it was most likely limited only to recruiting new members. The lack of more serious evidence during the criminal investigation³⁹ (such as weapons, ammunition, leaflets) testifies to it. The organisation also did not have any organisational funds - all expenses were paid for by members from their own resources and they used business trips in organisational matters.

The activity of the Union subjected to Henryk Świacki was undoubtedly higher. They tried to gain access to weapons and ammunition through the recruited soldiers and officers of the Polish Army, officers of the Civic Militia and the Security Office. During the period of their activity the members of the Union organized and stored the following types of weapons:

- The Mauzer rifle, the calibre of 7.62, No. 6423, made in 1915,
- The Mauzer rifle No. 4130,
- The Mauzer pistol the calibre of 7.65, No 73887,
- The 15-shot pistol (Browning) No. 177914, the calibre of 9⁴⁰.

For each of these weapons they had different amounts of ammunition. During the interrogation, the accused testified about more weapons (eg, Henryk Świacki of 4 guns and 100 rounds of ammunition, which was to be secured by Witold Sosnowski), but during the investigation only the above mentioned examples were found. In addition, people connected with the organisation possessed weapon, which was not in the records of the Union.

Polish territory, where it worked until December 1949. Since December 1949 in the group of Burdyn and Sadowski. After the group was split in April 1952 he moved onto the territory of the powiat of Augustów, where he joined the group of 'Gabryś' and 'Lot ', and after their departure in June 1952, he took over command of it. Killed on 2 X 1954.

³⁸ IPN Bi, sygn. 0090/120/1/d, IPN Bi, sygn. 0090/120/1/d, Charakterystyka przestępczej działalności (brak daty), k. 79- 80.

³⁹ IPN Bi, sygn. 019/52/1, Akt oskarżenia przeciwko Świackiemu Henrykowi i innym z 23 V 1952 r., k. 344; Akt oskarżenia przeciwko Snarskiemu Edwardowi i innym z 11V 1952 r., k. 21.

⁴⁰ IPN Białystok, sygn. 065/28, Notatka wyjaśniająca dot.[ycząca] charakterystyki nr 13 z 26 V 1978 r. (bez paginacji).

In September or October 1951 Henryk Świacki with Ryszard Skwarski planned a sabotage action, which aim was to destroy transformers in Orzysz. They were going to do this by draining the oil from the high-voltage transformers. For unknown reasons the action never took place.

The organisation was especially very active in the military unit in Orzysz. Henryk Świacki tried to take advantage of Władysław Wiśniewski's capabilities, who was not sworn in because, as he explained, he was a member of another underground organisation (he did not give its name.) For its needs, he said, he recruited members in Pisz, Biała Piska, Giżycko Szczytno and nearby villages: Guty Nadjeziorne (at present New Guty), Wierzbiny, Odoje, Czarne and in Orzysz - including several non-commissioned officers and officers who stole from stores 80 pairs of uniforms passing them for organisational purposes⁴¹. Wiśniewski worked as a chimney sweep in the barracks and therefore Henryk Świacki gave him orders to continue the recruitment of soldiers from the military unit, this time for the benefit of DZWON.

Peter Roch, a cobbler, also had contacts in the military unit in Orzysz and he enlisted captain Doszczowski in the ranks of the organisation.

According to the Witold Sosnowski's testimony, Henryk Świacki recruited a soldier serving in Orzysz in the rank of senior sergeant. In October the non-commissioned officer was officially transferred to Węgorzewo. Before leaving, he was to introduce Henry Świacki to an unknown by the name a second lieutenant, whose Świacki also recruited. The same officer provided the organisation with a leaflet of the anti-state content (Henry Świacki claimed to have received it in November from warrant officer Jan Borowicz). This leaflet was to be signed by the Home Army Headquarters and found on the telegraph pole at the railway station in Orzysz by one of the lieutenant's soldiers. The leaflet entitled 'Dear compatriots' served as a model for printing next ten copies thanks to the typewriter held by Henryk Grad (concealed in the Municipal Cooperative (GS) in Orzysz). Henryk Świacki intended to hang these leaflets out in the town, but his father objected to this idea. On the Christmas Eve, under the influence of the news heard on the radio, he wrote other leaflets, issued as 'The command of DZWON Headquarters' which, like the previous ones, he gave to members of the organisation. The leaflet appealed for more active underground activity. Furthermore, its intention was to increase the seriousness of the organisation and the authority of Henryk Świacki.

Since August the individual members of the organisation reported on the meetings proposals of eliminating several people, because of the way they were performing their social functions. Among them was the chairman of the Trade Union of Agricultural Workers in Orzysz – Józef Cielma (a member of PZPR - the Communist Party), the chairman of the People's Town Council and the secretary of the municipal committee of PZPR in Orzysz - Zuzga⁴². In December Władysław Wiśniewski proposed creating a firing squad, which would carry out executions on the most active members of the

⁴¹ IPN Bi, sygn. 0090/120/2/d, Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Sosnowskiego Witolda z 2 IV 1952 r., k. 116 – 117; Oświadczenie Sosnowskiego Witolda z 21 II 1952 r., k. 217 – 218.

⁴² IPN Bi, sygn. 0090/120/2/d, Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Sosnowskiego Witolda z 22 II 1952 r., k. 59. Information about the planned killings is confirmed by Marianna Snarska in her relation of 12 April 2009 (in possession of authors).

party, the Security Office and the Civic Militia officers. Edmund Grad found two people who were likely in the future to belong to the squad, which, according to Henryk Świacki's plans, was eventually to count up to six people⁴³. The squad commander was to be Ryszard Skwarski. However, this idea did not receive Władysław Świacki's support and after expressing objections, on 19th January 1952, he forbade them to develop this squad.

In October 1951, according to Henryk Świacki's relations, Mieczysław Zieliński received information from his brother-in-law (who he had recruited before) about the existence of the German underground organisation⁴⁴ in the village of Paple (and neighbouring villages). The organisation was to be commanded by the native inhabitant August Krupe – a former German soldier (as well as cooperating with the Union Otto Byczek). Krupe was to hold a transmitting and receiving radio station and use it to communicate with their fellow countrymen from West Germany. He was also in possession of information about weapon stores hidden by retreating German troops in 1945. According to Henryk Świacki's relations these magazines were to be hidden near the lake, between the settlement of Paple and the settlement of Guty⁴⁵. It is not impossible that Otto Bull also knew Augusta Krupe – according to his information, the place of weapons storing was to be near the station, at the crossroads near the village of New Guty. He shared the information with Jan Brozio. The German organisation became the subject of the conversation conducted by Henryk Świacki and his father in mid-January. He recommended his son to obtain more information on this case in order to dismantle and eliminate that organisation with his own forces or by sending anonymous to authorities. Shortly after this conversation an informer of Zieliński's brother-in-law went away and the contact was broken. August Krupe was detained and was a witness in the trial against members of DZWON. During the trial the case of the German organisation was not clarified⁴⁶. It might have become the subject of a separate investigation.

The Union under the of Henryk Świacki's chairmanship had the intention to carry out the anti-state propaganda towards recruits joining the Polish Army as well. Its purpose was to persuade them to join the ranks of the guerrillas operating within the territory of the Białystok voivodship. Due to the liquidation of the organisation, this action did not come off.

⁴³ IPN Bi, sygn. 0090/120/1/d, Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Świackiego Henryka z 26 II 1952 r., k. 152.

⁴⁴ Also Iwicki had knowledge about this organisation. IPN Bi, sygn. 0090/120/1/d, Charakterystyka przestępczej działalności organizacji DZWON (brak daty), k. 81.

⁴⁵ The location of the repeatedly mentioned during the investigation settlement of Paple has encountered serious difficulties. However, taking into consideration the frequent naming the surrounding localities in a similar way, such as Nowe Guty Settlement, Gaudynek Settlement, we assume that it was a small settlement with the colloquial name of Paple (another name helped the local population to locate the discussed place more precisely), which was administratively subordinated to the closest situated town (as listed earlier Guty Nadjeziorne).

⁴⁶ There is one retained piece of information about the failed attempt to recruit August Krupe by Władysław Wiśniewski. IPN Bi, sygn. 0090/120/10/d, Charakterystyka przestępczej działalności (brak daty), k. 90- 96.

5. THE EXPOSING AND LIQUIDATION OF THE ORGANISATION

According to the information contained in documents from the conducted investigations, the organisation DZWON led by Władysław Świacki and its link operating under the Henryk Świacki's chairmanship were worked out separately (even though that information leads to one person – Jan Zieliński).

As mentioned earlier, simultaneously to Władysław Świacki's Union activity, within the territory of Łomża and Grajewo poviats there was operating the guerrilla group of Jan Tabortowki 'Bruzda'. The Division III of the Regional Public Security Office in Białystok during the work on the development of the group analysed in details 'Bruzda's' contacts and fell on the trail of Jan Zieliński (the chairman of the municipal threesome of Radziłów). In the period from 1st August to 6th December 1951, he evaded compulsory deliveries of agricultural products to the benefit of the State, for which on 22nd December 1951 he was sentenced under the District Court in Grajewo judgement to one month in custody. On 2nd January 1952 he was detained by the Division III of the WUBP in Białystok (according to materials, immediately after serving the sentences, although a month did not pass) and as a result of the carried out questionings he revealed information about meetings held at Jan Tabortowski's with Władysław Świacki.

As a result of these actions, Władysław Świacki's activity in the Home Army during the occupation was analysed and he was appointed the candidate for recruitment to the agent through whom they planned to reach directly to 'Bruzda', and thus lead to the liquidation of the guerrilla group. Therefore, on 12th February 1952, on the order issued by the Department III of the MBP, Władysław Świacki was taken in secret, in order to carry out a gaining conversation. During the attempt of the recruitment he admitted to have organized the organisation functioning under the name of 'Democratic Union of Struggle for Independence' in May 1951. When it turned out that he was the leader of the Union, they resigned from the recruitment. UB officers doubted if he could carry out the tasks put to him honestly⁴⁷.

Based on these testimonies, on 13-16th February Leon Kownacki, Piotr Pawlik, Józef Siennicki, Włodzimierz Sosnowski, Wojciech Karwowski, Piotr Berner, Franciszek Wysocki, Zdzisław Lewiński were arrested. On 4-5th March there were arrested four other members of the organisation – Klemens Piotrowski, Stanisław Borowski, Stefan Pawlisz, Tadeusz Waniewski. During the searches conducted in the homes of those arrested no weapons, prohibited literature or other incriminating materials were found.

The immediate cause of exposing the Henryk Świacki's DZWON organisation was information received by the District Information Management of the Polish Army No. 1 from three confidential informers, nicknamed 'Zamierski', 'Lena' and 'Zyg-munt'⁴⁸. Their message became the basis for the development of the Union, which be-

⁴⁷ IPN Bi, 019/52/1, Charakterystyka reakcyjnej organizacji PN „Dzwon” wraz z materiałami pomocniczymi, pp. 17.

⁴⁸ IPN Bi, sygn. 065/28, Charakterystyka organizacji – dotycząca kwestionariusza nr 19 z 25 IX 1978 r., pp. 2 – 6.

gan in October 1951. As information about the organisation emerged from the military institution, it is likely the leakage had occurred in the military unit in Orzysz.

It is possible that Ryszard Skwarski denounced the DZWON organisation with his behaviour. As is clear from Henryk Świacki's testimony, he did not fulfil his duties satisfactorily, because *'... he could not talk to people and misunderstandings arose because of him, that is he could not hold his tongue in the conspiracy, because he discussed conspiracy matters with just anyone and boasted that he belonged to the guerrillas.'*⁴⁹ Henryk Świacki also informed that Skwarski tried to recruit Polish Army soldiers. This was to facilitate access to weapons and ammunition. For this reason, in August he tried to recruit Czesław Żelazny – the Polish Army officer of the military unit in Orzysz. The recruitment did not succeed. In addition, the officer told Skwarski that he was going to report to his superiors about the attempt of winning him over to an illegal organisation. Perhaps he denounced Skwarski actually, but was ordered not to disclose this fact and conduct observation activity. In relation to this situation Henryk Świacki ordered Skwarski to hide Jan Zieliński for some time.

The above version can be supported by the fact that Henryk Świacki and Ryszard Skwarski were detained first⁵⁰.

Unfortunately, we do not have information whether Jan Zieliński arrested on 2nd January 1952 contributed with his testimony to their arrest. He knew these two people personally from the Henryk Świacki's organisation.

However, based on operational data obtained on 23rd January 1952, the Regional Information Management of the Polish Army No. 7 arrested Ryszard Skwarski, and on 6th February - Henryk Świacki. On the grounds of these two persons' testimonies on 17th February there were arrested Witold Wagner, Mieczysław Zieliński, Witold Sosnowski, Henryk Grad, Edmund Grad, and Władysław Wiśniewski, on 28th February - Edward Snarski, Mieczysław Roszkowski, Władysław Junik, Józef Wasilewski and Piotr Chocha, and on 10th April - Adam Makowiecki. In total 31 people were arrested and indicted.

6. THE INVESTIGATION AND SENTENCES

Investigative proceedings towards the led by Władysław Świacki DZWON organisation were conducted by the Military District Court in Białystok.

The biggest difficulties associated with development of the organisation include:

- the lack of agencies in the environment of the organisation,
- the ternary system of the internal structure,
- the lack of information about DZWON members' hostility to 'people's power' and their refraining from committing crimes that might indicate the existence of the organisation.

The court in its verdict announced on 6th October 1952 applied the following penalties to members of the organisation:

⁴⁹ IPN Bi, sygn. 0090/120/1/d, Protokół przesłuchania Świackiego Henryka z 26 II 1952 r., k.148.

⁵⁰ IPN Bi, sygn. 065/28, Charakterystyka organizacji – dotycząca kwestionariusza nr 19 z 25 IX 1978 r., pp. 5.

- Świacki Władysław – sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment, deprivation of his civil rights for 5 years, confiscation of property to the benefit of the State Treasury,
- Zieliński Jan – sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment, deprivation of his civil rights for 4 years, the forfeiture of property,
- Kownacki Leon – sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment, deprivation of his civil rights for 3 years, the forfeiture of property,
- Lewiński Zdzisław – sentenced to 8 years' imprisonment, deprivation of his civil rights for 3 years, the forfeiture of property,
- Pawlik Piotr – sentenced to 8 years' imprisonment, deprivation of his civil rights for 3 years, the forfeiture of property,
- Wysocki Franciszek – sentenced to 6 years' imprisonment, deprivation of his civil rights for 2 years, the forfeiture of property,
- Sosnowski Włodzimierz – sentenced to 6 years' imprisonment, deprivation of his civil rights for 2 years, the forfeiture of property,
- Berner Piotr - sentenced to 6 years' imprisonment, deprivation of his civil rights for 2 years, the forfeiture of property,
- Piotrowski Klemens – sentenced to 5 years' imprisonment, deprivation of his civil rights for 3 years, the forfeiture of property,
- Siennicki Józef – sentenced to 3 years' imprisonment, deprivation of his civil rights for 1 year, the forfeiture of property,
- Pawlisz Stefan – sentenced to 3 years' imprisonment, deprivation of his civil rights for 1 year, the forfeiture of property,
- Waniewski Tadeusz - sentenced to 3 years' imprisonment, deprivation of his civil rights for 2 years, the forfeiture of property,
- Borawski Stanisław - sentenced to 3 years' imprisonment, deprivation of his civil rights for 1 year, the forfeiture of property,
- Karwowski Wojciech – sentenced to 2 years and 6 months' imprisonment, deprivation of his civil rights for 2 years, the forfeiture of property⁵¹.

Investigatory proceedings towards the Henryk Świacki's DZWON organisation were conducted by the Military District Court in Olsztyn. On 18th April the verdict in the case of Mieczysław Wojciechowski was announced and on 25th April the court trial against Antoni Burgraf, Lucjan Zapert and Mieczysław Truszkowski was brought to an end.

During the investigation the accused people were divided into two groups of seven, which consisted of:

- Edward Snarski, Mieczysław Roszkowski, Władysław Junik, Witold Wagner, Edmund Grad, Józef Wasilewski, Adam Makowiecki – in this group the court trial ended on 10th June 1952,

⁵¹ IPN Bi, sygn. 019/52/1, Charakterystyka nr 17 nielegalnej organizacji politycznej p. n. Demokratyczny Związek Walki o Niepodległość „Dzwon” z 28 XII 1976 r., pp.18-19.

- Henryk Świacki, Mieczysław Zieliński, Witold Sosnowski, Ryszard Skwarski, Henryk Grad, Władysław Wiśniewski, Piotr Chocha – the court trial ended on 17th July 1952.

All these aforementioned people the court accused of ‘... *violent attempting to change the regime of the Polish State, expressed with the consent to the affiliation to the criminal union acting under the name of DZWON (Democratic Union of Struggle for Independence⁵²)*’. During interrogations the accused were tormented, mistreated, beaten and humiliated while being forced out a confession. The remained accounts give evidence of methods used during interrogations. Here is a part of the Mrs Marianna Snarska’s description on the course of her husband Edward Snarski’s detention and interrogation:

*‘...at the beginning of February 1952, early in the morning, when my husband was still asleep the UB and MO officers came to his apartment. He was arrested and transported to Pisz, then to Barczewo and finally to Olsztyn. During the investigation in Olsztyn every day and night he was summoned for questioning. He was often beaten with fists by three officers of the UB at the same time. Moreover, he had his fingers near nails pressed with the door. When he did not want to testify he often received a dark cell punishment for at least 48 hours. The dark cell was a room 1 metre by 1 metre with a wet floor on which he could not lie down. During the interrogation he was in one cell mostly with priests and representatives of the intelligentsia. They were political prisoners. At that time he did not meet anyone from the DZWON organisation and knew nothing about his colleagues from the organisation. He also did not confess to belonging to DZWON, so one day he was taken to a confrontation, during which he was shown a neighbour, whom he had recruited before. This neighbour confirmed to have been recruited by Snarski – then my husband confessed’.*⁵³

Court trials carried out to members of Henryk Świacki’s DZWON organisation led to a conviction of 15 people as members of the organisation and they were imposed the following penalties:

- 1 person sentenced to life imprisonment (Henryk Świacki)⁵⁴,
- 1 person sentenced to 15 years’ imprisonment (Ryszard Skwarski),
- 2 people sentenced to 14 years’ imprisonment (Mieczysław Zieliński),
- 1 person sentenced to 13 years’ imprisonment (Edward Snarski),
- 1 person sentenced to 12 years’ imprisonment (Henryk Grad),
- 1 person sentenced to 10 years’ imprisonment,
- 2 people sentenced to 9 years’ imprisonment (Mieczysław Roszkowski, Witold Wagner),

⁵² IPN Bi, sygn. 0090/120/10/d, Akt oskarżenia przeciwko Świackiemu Henrykowi i innym z 23 V 1952 r., k. 331 – 344; Akt oskarżenia przeciwko Snarskiemu Edwardowi i innym z 10 V 1952 r., k. 19 – 21.

⁵³ Marianna Snarska’s relations of 12 IV 2009 (in the authors’ possession).

⁵⁴ According to the information contained in: *Charakterystyce nr 17 nielegalnej organizacji politycznej p.n. „Demokratyczny Związek Walki o Niepodległość „Dzwon”* dated on 28th December 1976; Świacki Henryk was sentenced to nine years’ imprisonment, deprivation of civil rights for five years and the forfeiture of property. Probably, this is the information taking into account applying the provisions of the Acts on Amnesty from 22 X 1952 and from 27 IV 1956 towards Henryk Świacki.

- 1 person sentenced to 8 years' imprisonment,
- 1 person sentenced to 7 years' imprisonment (Piotr Chocha),
- 1 person sentenced to 6 years' imprisonment,
- 1 person sentenced to 4 years' imprisonment (Władysław Wiśniewski),
- 1 person sentenced to 2 years' imprisonment,
- 1 person sentenced to 2 years' imprisonment, with 3-year suspension⁵⁵.

It should be noted that the most important members of the organisation were caught and received the highest of the above penalties. Henryk Świacki's assault on the Security Office functionary in Olsztyn corporal Bronisław Mazur also contributed to the amount of his sentence. Being held in custody '*... he suddenly threw himself on the above mentioned officer with the intention to commit murder by strangling him and then free himself from detention by inflicting a number of physical injuries on Mazur*'.⁵⁶

The other defendants were 14 people, who - as a result of the investigation - were proved the cooperation with the Union: Stefania Pośpieszyńska, Eugeniusz Parda, Mieczysław Wagner, Zygmunt Wagner, Ryszard Rządiewicz, Jan Bozio, Stanisław Mikołajczak, Bronisław Iwicki, August Krupa, Otto Byczek, Mieczysław Wojciechowski i Antoni Dolecki.

These people were sentenced under a court judgement:

- 1 person to 13 years' imprisonment (Władysław Junik),
- 1 person to 11 years' imprisonment,
- 1 person to 8 years' imprisonment,
- 4 people to 5 years' imprisonment,
- 1 person to 3 years' imprisonment (Józef Wasilewski),
- 1 person to 2 years' imprisonment,
- 4 people to 1 year and 6 months' imprisonment,
- 1 person to 1 year' imprisonment.

Towards two people (Mieczysław Truszkowski and probably Tadeusz Rytałowski) the proceedings were discontinued.

As a result of the entry into force of provisions of the Act on Amnesty from 22nd November 1952 and applying the Act on Amnesty of 27th April 1956 those judgments to the convicted people were successively mitigated. For example, Edward Snarski, who was sentenced to a total of 13 years in prison, the loss of public rights and honour civil rights for a period of 4 years and the forfeiture of property to the benefit of the State Treasury, the first sentence he had commuted to 8 years and 8 months in prison, with sustaining the further sanctions, then the penalty was reduced to 4 years in jail

⁵⁵ IPN Bi, sygn. 065/28, Charakterystyka organizacji – dotycząca kwestionariusza nr 19 z 25 IX 1978 r., pp. 6.

⁵⁶ IPN Bi, sygn. 0090/120/10/d, Akt oskarżenia przeciwko Świackiemu Henrykowi i innym z 29 II 1952 r., k. 338.

with the loss of public rights and honor civil rights for a period of 3 years. As a result of these changes he served a prison sentence from 28th February 1952 to 4th July 1956⁵⁷.

People who came out of prison were obliged to report, in the case of summons, to militia stations relevant to their places of living. Moreover, former members of the organisation were under close surveillance. As the preserved records show it was confirmed that former prisoners maintained contacts between each other and, in particular, with the former leader of the organisation – Władysław Świacki. Having regard to the above as well as the reasons for imposing prison sentences, on 19th September 1957 a decision to bring an observational action against Edward Snarski, Mieczysław Zieliński, Witold Wagner, Witold Sosnowski and Edmund Grad⁵⁸ was made. The observed group was named 'The Incurables' and was placed under 'surveillance', which gave a negative result. These people were under constant monitoring until 5th May 1960, when it was found that '... they do not display hostile activities ...' and the further conducting of the action was brought to an end⁵⁹.

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Z DZIEJÓW ORZYSKIEJ KONSPIRACJI

Streszczenie

Przełom lat czterdziestych i pięćdziesiątych to okres wznowienia aktywności różnych grup i organizacji konspiracyjnych. Jedną z nich był „DZWON” - Demokratyczny Związek Walki o Niepodległość – organizacja, która działała w okresie od maja 1951 r. do marca 1952 r. Założycielem i przywódcą organizacji był Władysław Świacki, mający doświadczenie w walce z okupantem, jak również z pracą w podziemiu.

Program polityczny organizacji DZWON opierał się na powszechnie branej pod uwagę przez społeczeństwo w ówczesnym czasie możliwości wybuchu III wojny światowej, co zarazem

⁵⁷ The certificate issued in order to obtain veterans' entitlements issued with the date of 23rd January 1992 r by the Regional Court in Olsztyn, Sr. 116/52 (in the authors' possession).

⁵⁸ IPN Bi, sygn. 0090/120/4/d, Postanowienie o założeniu sprawy ewidencyjno – obserwacyjnej na grupę Snarskiego Edwarda i innych z 19 IX 1957 r.

⁵⁹ IPN Bi, sygn. 0090/120/11/d, Postanowienie o zakończeniu i przekazaniu do archiwum spraw ewidencji operacyjnej – kryptonim sprawy – „Niepoprawni” dotyczącej Edwarda Snarskiego i innych z 5 V 1960 r.

stwarzałoby możliwość podjęcia zbrojnej walki i w efekcie końcowym obalenie zależnej od ZSRR władzy komunistycznej. Struktura wewnętrzna organizacji była ściśle dostosowana do warunków konspiracyjnych. Władysław Świacki stworzył system trójkowy, co miało gwarantować bezpieczeństwo poszczególnych osób, nawet w przypadku aresztowań.

W okresie od maja 1951 r. do lutego 1952 r. organizacji udało się objąć swoim zasięgiem część województwa olsztyńskiego i białostockiego. Władze komunistyczne bardzo szybko wpadły na trop organizacji. Pierwsze aresztowania nastąpiły na przełomie stycznia i lutego 1952 roku. Do kwietnia tego roku zatrzymano kilkadziesiąt osób. Po brutalnym śledztwie wielu członków organizacji zostało skazanych na kilkanaście lat więzienia.

Słowa kluczowe: *podziemie polityczne i zbrojne, Demokratyczny Związek Walki o Niepodległość 1951 -1952 r., DZWON, konspiracja*

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