

Odezwa Rady Jedności Narodowej do narodu polskiego i narodów sprzymierzonych - Tekst angielski

July 1, 1945 Since September 1939, the Polish Nation has been waging a deadly battle for its biological existence and historical ideals. It has always been committed to peace and freedom, respect for the rights of individuals and of nations, to freedom of belief, and to religious tolerance. Torn apart by the partitioning powers¹, systematically destroyed for 150 years, the Polish nation did not lay down its arms, but fought everywhere and ceaselessly against the system of violence guided by the mottos “the free with the free, and the equal with the equal” and “for our freedom and yours.” When the threat of totalitarian tyranny hung over Europe and the world, the Polish nation was the first to take up arms against Hitler’s imperialism², engaging its forces for a month in unequal struggle until – attacked from behind by Soviet Russia³ – it succumbed to overwhelming might, thereafter to embark on the thorny road of emigration and clandestine resistance. When our brothers, cast into exile by the hand of fate, held high the Polish flag whilst fighting alongside the allies, our country was locked in an even fiercer underground struggle, one waged for years in the belief that justice would ultimately triumph over Nazi barbarity.

¹ Resulting from the partition perpetrated by Russia, Prussia, and Austria in three stages – in 1772, 1793, and 1795 – Poland lost her independence for 123 years (until 1918).

² The Second World War started with the attack of the German Third Reich on Poland, on September 1, 1939.

³ September 17, 1939 saw the Soviet Union invade Poland from the east.



Poland therefore has an undeniable right to respect and to the assistance of civilised humanity entire, for she has come to symbolise faithfulness to alliances, implacable courage, and militant democracy. Poland's war aims and the programme of Fighting Poland

When the September storm in Poland brought down the edifice of the Sanacja¹ system, which had ruled Poland for a number years against the will and opinion of the nation, all the political parties that had opposed that system formed a Polish government-in-exile². When the late General Sikorski³ was still alive, It declared the following war aims of the Polish people:

1. To fight the Germans until they are finally crushed.
2. To rebuild an independent and sovereign Poland, along with her territorial integrity.
3. To implement, in post-war Poland, full social and political democracy in place of the bankrupt Sanacja system.
4. To safeguard the sovereignty and development of Poland and other smaller nations living between the powers of the East and West through a voluntary democratic union of co-equal Central European nations.
5. To co-exist peacefully with Russia and to reach a mutual agreement that would secure against future German aggression.
6. To aspire to full international democracy, that is, a world peace organisation based on the accord of all democratic states and co-equal nations.

¹ Sanacja ('healing') was the informal name of the ruling establishment created by Józef Piłsudski in 1926. It lasted until the outbreak of WWII.

² The Government of the Republic of Poland in Exile was a legal continuation of the authorities of the Second Republic (i.e., interwar Poland), which – after the German and Soviet invasions of Poland – were forced to leave the country. President Ignacy Mościcki named Władysław Raczkiewicz as his successor; Raczkiewicz appointed General Władysław Sikorski President of the Council of Ministers (i.e., Prime Minister).

³ Władysław Sikorski (1881–1943) was an army general, the Chief Commander of the Polish Armed Forces, and Prime Minister of the Government-in-Exile. He was killed when his aircraft crashed in Gibraltar on July 4, 1943.



On this platform, all the major democratic parties of Underground Poland¹ (The Peasants' Party, Polish Socialist Party, National Party, and Labour Party) conjoined together in a “quadripartite understanding“, on the basis of which they established a homeland government that was the extension and counterpart of the Polish Government in London. The Homeland Political Representation expanded this bloc of democratic parties to include other political groups (The Democratic Union, “Racławice” Peasant Freedom Organisation and the “Fatherland” Organisation). Together, they set up the Council of National Unity², which served as the political base for the Government Plenipotentiary³, the Homeland Council of Ministers⁴, and the Home Army (AK).

The declarations⁵ of the Homeland Political Representation of July 15, 1943 and of the Council of National Unity of March 15, 1944 set forth a programme of Fighting Poland whose main points are:

1. to regain independence and sovereignty,
2. democratic freedoms,
3. agrarian reform,
4. to improve the lives of the working masses and to include them in government,
5. local, economic, and cultural self-government,
6. to reclaim lands in the west,
7. inviolability of the eastern border,
8. a union of Central European nations,
9. alliance with Western democracies and good relations with the USSR,
10. genuine international democracy.

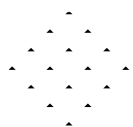
¹ The term ‘Polish Underground State’ describes the clandestine structures of the state operating during WWII (from September 27, 1939 to July 1, 1945) in Nazi-occupied Poland, and reporting to the Government-in-Exile.

² The Council of National Unity, The Homeland Political Representation (of the Polish People) was established on August 15, 1943 as an authority representing the four main political forces of the Polish Underground State. With the co-optation of some minor parties and factions, the body was re-established on January 9, 1944 as the Council of National Unity, whose status was that of the conspiratorial parliament of the Underground State.

³ Subordinate to the Government-in-Exile, the Government Plenipotentiary (more commonly referred to as the Delegate) for Poland headed the Government Delegation for Poland – the supreme administrative authority of the Underground State (established in 1940).

⁴ The Homeland Council of Ministers was the Underground State’s executive authority, established on May 3, 1944 by the Government Delegate for Poland, pursuant to a decree of the President of the Republic of Poland in Exile. The Council was run by a plenipotentiary – the Government Delegate for Poland, in the rank of Deputy Prime Minister.

⁵ The Council’s programme declaration, What is the Polish Nation fighting for?, determined the main wartime and warfare tasks for the Republic and outlined a socioeconomic transformation programme for the country under peace conditions.



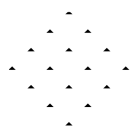
Russian policy towards Poland These objectives of the Polish people were categorically opposed by Soviet Russia, which has been pursuing westward territorial expansion. Russia asserted that a democratic union of Central European nations would compromise its security, and constitute a cordon sanitaire between West and East, which bore no relation to what the proponents of this idea had in mind. In line with its plan to divide the world into spheres of influence, Soviet Russia decided to forcibly include all Central European nations in its political system. Directly bordering the Soviet Union, Poland was the first victim of this policy. Russia began by arrogating Polish lands east of the Curzon Line¹, which accounted for a half of our country's territory. Next, the USSR launched a campaign against the legitimate Polish government in London, accusing it of fascist tendencies and collaboration with Germany. Thereafter, the Soviets formed a second Polish 'government'² and sought to force it onto the Polish people, thereby curtailing Polish sovereignty. Finally, the Soviets occupied the entire territory of Poland, in the wake of which began NKVD³ rule, terror, and the persecution of Polish underground heroes. The Polish nation welcomed the Red Army as a liberator from the Nazi yoke. But disappointment soon set in. The broadest masses of the people came to realise that democracy was to be found in the camp of Underground Poland, while the Lublin Committee⁴ was a dictatorship supported by foreign forces, rather than the will and trust of the Polish people.

¹ The demarcation line between the Polish and Bolshevik armies, as proposed by British diplomats at the Spa conference in July 1920. Stalin referred to the Curzon Line in the negotiations on the post-war Polish-Soviet border.

² The Polish Committee for National Liberation (polish acronym: PKWN) was an interim authority that acted as a Polish government in Polish territories liberated by the Soviets from the Nazi occupation. The Committee was established on July 20, 1944 in Moscow by a group of Polish communists, at the decision of Stalin.

³ NKVD (acronym from the Russian: Narodnyi Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del), the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs, was the central security authority in Soviet Russia (from 1917) and subsequently in the Soviet Union, until 1946; commonly referred to as the 'political police'.

⁴ The commonly used acronym is 'PKWN'.



Despite these disappointments, the political parties of Underground Poland made a great effort to reach an understanding with the Soviet Union. After Mikołajczyk¹ stepped down from government and, acting on his pessimistic assessment of Polish chances, decided to seek compromise, the democratic parties in the homeland that formed the power base of Prime Minister Arciszewski's² government demanded a cabinet reshuffle to reconcile the positions of Mikołajczyk and Arciszewski. On February 22nd of this year, they issued a declaration that recognised the need for talks with Russia on coming out of hiding, and called for speedy formation of a Government of National Unity that could take part in the San Francisco³ conference. This goodwill was trampled on by Soviet Russia, which had invited envoys of Underground Poland to discussions, only to imprison them and put them on trial⁴ as saboteurs. But Russia miscalculated in assuming that this would cut off the leaders of Underground Poland from their nation.

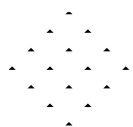
It proved impossible to drive a wedge between the people and those of its leaders who for years had organised and waged the battle against foreign invasion, all the while putting their lives at utmost risk and displaying utmost commitment. It proved impossible to convince Poles that Fighting Poland had been subverting the Soviets in collusion with the Germans. Testifying to the uncompromising anti-German attitude is the blood of hundreds of thousands of Polish underground martyrs and Home Army heroes, shed in open battle and Gestapo torture chambers, sealed by the heroic feat of the Warsaw Uprising, which was launched with faith in the integrity of Western and Eastern allies. Our record is clean. It is not us but they who one day will have to account for themselves before history.

¹ Stanisław Mikołajczyk (1901–66) was Prime Minister of the Polish Government-in-Exile from July 14, 1943 to November 24, 1944.

² Tomasz Stefan Arciszewski (1877–1955) succeeded S. Mikołajczyk as Prime Minister with the Government-in-Exile (in office November 29, 1944 to 1947).

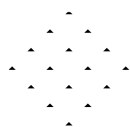
³ It was resolved at the Yalta conference in February 1945 that a United Nation's founding conference would be held in San Francisco. The conference opened on April 26, 1945 and was attended by delegates of fifty countries; Poland was not represented.

⁴ In February/March 1945, the leaders of the Polish Underground State were invited by the NKVD to political talks. They were presented with a warrant of safety. However, once they arrived at the meeting to be held in Pruszków (outside Warsaw) on March 27-28, 1945, sixteen of them were arrested and transported to Moscow. They were charged with membership in an illegal organisation, collaboration with the Germans, and pursuing anti-Soviet activities. In a staged trial, they were sentenced to penalties of imprisonment.



There was never any cooperation between Underground Poland and the Germans. Nor was there willingness to carry out diversions against the Soviet Union. On the contrary, representatives of the homeland government and the Home Army tried everywhere to come forward and cooperate with the Red Army, for which however they were arrested and executed. The political parties of the Council of National Unity also sought to come out of hiding and establish relations with Russia, as well demonstrated by the talks which Polish underground leaders held in Pruszków prior to their imprisonment. It was Russia that spurned this offer for cooperation and agreement between the two nations, driving everything that was independent in Poland back into the underground, and tolerating only those who bowed to the Soviets and obeyed their commands.

This is the truth about Underground Poland and her proud struggle for national honour and independence. Here is not the place to showcase her sacrifice and merits; let us leave that for history to judge. Rather, suffice it to say that Fighting Poland kept the spirit of resistance and freedom alive in the people; it hardened Poland's popular masses and nurtured in them the attitude that manifests itself so clearly today. The Polish people never lost its true self. Amidst the greatest misfortunes, it did not morally succumb to designs against its interests or will. Fighting Poland bequeaths this great capital to those who will carry on the national struggle for sovereignty via other methods.



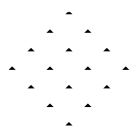
The decision of Underground Poland

The conclusion of the war against Germany has found Poland in an incredibly difficult, even tragic situation. Whereas other nations, particularly in the West, once rid of the German occupation regained genuine freedom and could independently commence organising their lives, for Poland, which had suffered supreme losses as a result of the war, what came was occupation and a government imposed by a neighbouring state, as well as denial of the prospects for assistance from her Western allies.

In this state of affairs, the inflexible stance of the Polish government¹ in London regarding decisions taken in Crimea was increasingly out of touch with Russian facts accomplished in the Polish homeland. Fighting Poland must in particular reckon with the conditions created by the Moscow conference² and the resulting compromise between Mikołajczyk's group and several Polish democratic activists on the one hand, and the Lublin Committee on the other. Together with the formation of a new government and its recognition by the Western powers, we can no longer continue a legal struggle in the underground, based as it was on the universally recognised government in London. Thus we must now confront the problem of an open fight waged by democratic parties in Poland for national goals and their own programmes.

¹ This refers to the agreements and decisions made by the anti-Nazi coalition members at the Yalta conference in February 1945.

² At the conference in Moscow in June 1945, former Prime Minister of the Government-in-Exile Stanisław Mikołajczyk came to terms with the communists, agreeing that an Interim Government of National Unity, completely subordinate to the USSR, would be established.

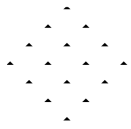


In this open struggle, Underground Poland does not wish to create obstacles for the people of goodwill who found themselves in the Provisional Government of National Unity. Nor does it wish to hinder any political parties in choosing their paths and the tactics they will want or have to embrace in this struggle.

At the session held on July 1st of this year, all the democratic parties of Underground Poland represented in the Council of National Unity adopted a unanimous resolution to dissolve the Council, and communicate this at home and abroad.

By bringing itself to take this step of self-denial, the Council of National Unity is proving again its supreme goodwill, as it did in the declaration of February 22nd and in engaging in the talks in Pruszków.

Reluctant to continue stoking the spirit of clandestine resistance in Polish society, and in clearing before the democratic parties a path of open cooperation with the government and of head-on struggle for their goals, the Council of National Unity will not conceal from the Polish public its fear that this attempt may end in new disappointment and catastrophe brought about by the contracting party's failure to keep its promises. The political parties of the Council of National Unity have harrowing experiences of this. These fears will remain valid so long as Soviet troops and the NKVD are on Polish soil. Yet again in her history, Poland wishes to be the one who, in respecting the principles of honesty and truth in politics, wants to believe in the honesty of other governments and nations.



The Council's dissolution is not tantamount to the nation's spiritual capitulation. The goals the political parties of Fighting Poland set for themselves remain unchanged. We are deeply confident that these parties will not waver in their struggle until their common cause of a fully sovereign Poland is fulfilled, and their aspiration for real democracy in the Polish state and in international relations is accomplished.

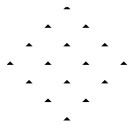
The programme for Polish democracy

When combating Polish political parties that represent a great majority of the people, Soviet propaganda ever bandies the slogan of democracy, accusing all the Poles who advocate real independence of being reactionary. We therefore deem it necessary to precisely define our understanding of democracy, as everything indicates that there is a fundamental divergence between the concept of democracy in Western Europe and the parallel notion in Eastern Europe.

The Polish people believe that:

1. Democracy is a freedom, vested in the broad masses of a nation, to choose a socio-political system of government and the worldview it originates from.
2. Democracy is a freedom that the Atlantic Charter¹ pertinently described as the freedom from fear and want, personal freedom, and freedom of speech and belief.
3. Democracy means equal rights for all political groups, be they conservative or radical-progressive, provided they do not abuse the freedom of association to propagate anarchy or impose their views upon others by force.

¹ The Atlantic Charter was a pivotal US and British policy statement announced on August 14, 1941 to determine the ideal objectives of the war for both powers and the Allied goals and founding principles for the post-war world.



4. Democracy is majority rule arising from free elections, held by universal five-adjective ballot.
5. Democracy is a government of laws, that is, the rule of law that applies to the governing and governed alike, and safeguards both civil liberties and the government's authority.
6. Democracy is justice founded on a collective sense of what is right, entitling every individual, the working class, and the nation to live in conditions that ensure not only material subsistence, but also comprehensive development of their creative potential.
7. Democracy is a collective security system whereby all nations abjure the use of force and commit themselves to obey decisions made by international bodies on the basis of objective norms of international law.
8. Democracy means recognizing and securing the equal rights of nations great and small, so as to suppress, once and for all, the desire of big powers to win hegemony over other nations and divide the world into spheres of influence. In its relations with Russia, the Polish nation demands nothing but Russia's respect for the fundamental principles of democracy that all freedom-loving nations fought to save and protect over the past five and a half years.

Today, bringing to a close the valiant period of clandestine struggle waged by Polish democratic parties for the sake of these democratic principles, the Council of National Unity, drawing upon these principles, wishes to bequeath the following programme for Polish democracy.



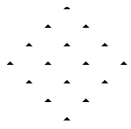
THE TESTAMENT OF FIGHTING POLAND

The postulates of which are:

1. The withdrawal of Soviet troops and the Russian political police from Polish territory.
2. The cessation of political persecutions. This will be confirmed by:
 - a) releasing those condemned and imprisoned in the Moscow trial,
 - b) amnesty for political prisoners, all Home Army soldiers and so-called “forest units”,
 - c) return of Poles deported into the depths of Russia and closure of concentration camps that evoke sad memories of German totalitarian methods,
 - d) abolishing the political system that manifests itself in the so-called Ministry of Security¹.
3. The unification and independence of the Polish Army by:
 - a) the Polonisation of officer corps in General Rola-Żymierski's² army,
 - b) the honourable return of Polish troops from abroad together with their weapons,
 - c) the unification – on equal terms – of the army stationed abroad and the former Home Army with General Żymierski's army.
4. The cessation of the occupational authorities' economic devastation of the country. 5. Permission for all Polish democratic parties to participate in five-adjective elections. 6. The guarantee of Poland's foreign policy independence.

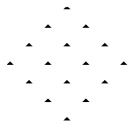
¹ The Ministry of Public Security (polish acronym: MBP) was established on January 1, 1945 in order to protect and defend the communist authorities, pacify resistance on the part of society, and maintain public order. The MBP operated under strict control of the NKVD.

² Michał Rola-Żymierski (1890–1989) was Minister of National Defence in 1944–9 and Chief Commander of the Polish Army from July 1944.



7. The creation of fully-fledged local, socio-economic, and cultural and educational self-government.
8. The nationalisation of major capitalist assets and the establishment of a system for the just distribution of national income.
9. Guarantee of the presence of the working masses in managing and controlling the entire national economy, and guarantee of the provision of material conditions that secure family well-being and personal cultural development.
10. The freedom of the working class to fight for its rights within the framework of an unencumbered labour movement.
11. The just carrying out of agrarian reform and nation's control over the settlement campaign in the recovered Western Territories and East Prussia.
12. The founding of universal and democratic teaching and education on moral principles, and the spiritual legacy of both Western civilisation and our country.

By announcing their fight for this programme in the open political arena, the democratic parties of the Council of National Unity express their hope that the Provisional Government of National Unity will seek to democratise Poland and erase the differences and disputes hitherto dividing various parts of Polish society. So long as this pursuit meets with no real results, there can be no lasting relaxation in home affairs, and many Polish underground activists will have to stay in hiding – not because of any sinister designs they might harbour against the government, but out of the fear for their lives.



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A new war would inflict such horrific injuries on the Polish nation that it is the shared desire of all the Poles that a peaceful agreement be reached between Poland and Russia, and England, America and Russia. If such agreement is to be lasting, it will not be enough to rebuild trust in Polish-Russian relations alone. The Polish people is a part of the great family of Central European nations, in particular the Western Slavic peoples, to whom it is linked by geopolitical location and history, and with whom it wants to form a close political, economic, and cultural community.

It is our hope that an agreement with Russia on these terms is possible, that it will eliminate once and for all the Polish-Russian enmity stemming from reactionary tsarist policy, and that enmity will be replaced with mutual respect, trust, and friendship for the sake of both nations, Europe, and the entire democratic humanity. The Council of National Unity

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