

Special Edition under the Honorary Patronage
of the Association of Warsaw Insurgents

WARSAW UPRISING 1944
Part One

SYNOPSIS AND APOGEE OF REVOLTS
—Against Barbarism, Genocide, Crimes,
Terror, Partition, Enslavement, Betrayal

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The current Special Edition continues our earlier publications on the Warsaw Uprising and heralds further studies and international debate. Its core are the insurgents' own reminiscences and reflections, portraying life during those tragic and unforgotten 66 days. Some were partly written yet after the battles but all described events are true and were personally experienced by their authors, which gives them testimonial rank. Most are also supplemented by their authors' personal comments.

Most of the authors distinguished themselves during the Uprising, many were decorated with Poland's highest military order, the *Virtuti Militari*, and Cross of Valor. Contrary to our tradition in this special issue the texts are followed by the insurgent authors' biograms, which we believe additionally confirm their faith in their ideals and values.

This special issue has been divided into parts, aimed to present the structure, dynamics, antinomies, tragism, meanings and transforming significance of this momentous, infinitely selfless, heroic and ethically pure—but also terrible and painful—event in Poland's difficult history.

The chapter titles signal problems for further study based on synthesis of to-date knowledge as well as the need for a fresh, more universal approach to the Warsaw Uprising issue on a national and—increasingly—European scale.

I. THE ABSURDITIES OF THE SITUATION,
THE MEANING OF STRUGGLE

We tend to view Polish history through the prism of its contradictions, sometimes unfortunately also its absurdities and pathologies. This allows us to see with growing clarity the conflicts and inconsistencies surrounding the Warsaw Uprising, its mission and ideology.

Poland's situation—contrary to the incomparably better situation of other European countries at the time—was determined by geo-political

and social—and practically unsolvable—contradictions. Paradoxically, these contrasts also proved durable in the West, and from the perspective of passed time, in democracy as a whole despite its ambition to be the world's most acceptable system.

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II. THE UPRISING AS A TRAGIC AND HEROIC LEGEND: TRANSFORMING POLAND

Two very different but complementary approaches to the past. One, of a Home Army soldier, a fighter in the city's vicinity, who decades later as a “Solidarity” activist watched his ideals triumph over history. And the other one, of an anguished father who lost his only child in the Warsaw Uprising, at those times a leading Polish intellectual in exile.

These approaches, also strongly present in other features in this issue, will underlie forthcoming studies on one of history's most momentous cultural transformations: the triumph of moral values over selfish political barbarism (Mounier's “tragic optimism”).

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III. SOLDIERS OF THE UPRISING IN THE FACE OF EXTREMES AND ESCHATOLOGICAL SITUATIONS

Battle reminiscences show the insurgents' extreme commitment and martyrdom: out of 2,200-strong “Radosław” Battalion which won fame in the Uprising's opening days in Wola only 800 survived until the insurgency's final days (according to the first testimony).

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IV. PHILOSOPHERS-SOLDIERS: “THINKING IS FIGHTING”

Warsaw University also opposed the occupants, and in a double sense: for one, teaching was forbidden and tutors as well as students risked severe punishment, death included. The clandestine university’s facilities were dispersed around the city and many students joined the Uprising as regular soldiers. Here we bring only a few accounts by persons close to Poland’s leading intellectuals: Tadeusz Kotarbiński, Władysław Tatar-kiewicz, Maria and Stanisław Ossowski (more in subsequent issues of *Dialogue and Universalism*).

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V. POLISH ANTINOMIES—THE ENDLESS CONTROVERSIES

The first author in this section was six when in the Uprising’s early days he crawled from under a pile of bodies in Warsaw’s Mokotów district. During following decades, as a US-residing professor and eminent humanist, he frequently analyzed the Warsaw Uprising and Polish history, coming up with a very pessimistic vision, which in a sense complements the experiences of the section’s next author, Wiesław Chrzanowski, former Speaker of the Polish Parliament, who presents his own pessimistic assessment of the 1944 revolt. This corresponds strikingly with the views of a US Airforce general and son of Polish immigrants, who bases his conclusions on vast knowledge, extensive documentation and contemporary analysis.

Closing the section is an indepth account by a Warsaw insurgent, severely wounded during the fighting, at the same time a historian who the Uprising circumstances has presented on a broad scale.

Dialogue and Universalism will welcome all contributions to this debate.

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