

TADEUSZ SUŁOWSKI (POLAND)

CLIP 01

My name is Tadeusz Sułowski. I was born on the 4th Feb 1929 in Warsaw.

I came from a landowning family. I mean my parents used to be land stewards. My father, despite being a mechanical engineer and having studied in Germany, decided to stay and to live off the land, probably because of some family connections, and the country was always his top interest.

I was on holiday at my grandma Wanda Rozwadowska's landed estate in the Płock county. The name of the estate was Kobylniki. It was situated 10 km off Wyszogród.

And this is where the outbreak of war found me. And it was still the first day when the German aircraft came dropping bombs, I don't know why, on the neighbouring villages. Among others in Kobylniki, they aimed one of the bombs at the most beautiful farm which existed there.

Right after the outbreak of the war some German motorcycles appeared, some patrols, which probably were supposed to check for any Polish troops staying there or not.

Soon, a passenger car followed with some officers. One of the officers got out, he climbed the porch stairs and my aunt, the one in the photo, came to talk to him, because she spoke some German and French. The German wanted to shake hands with her, but she withdrew her hand. The German smiled sadly, at the time they were still gentlemen and he said in French: C'est la guerre – this is war.

CLIP 02

As early as October the Germans sent in the so-called Treuhänder, (a trustee) on behalf of the Germans. Not only a caretaker but an administrator. His name was Mr Ertbruger. Erik Ertbruger. A well built, tall, handsome man, thirty-something. He was a plane spotter and was shot down over Poland and, probably to compensate for his injuries, command assigned him to administer this Polish land estate so that he could rest peacefully away from the front and the hardships of war. Ertbruger at first behaved very decently. He played with us, with the kids, we played Halma [Chinese Checkers] and draughts. And it seemed that this was quite a nice man. Well, unfortunately, the Germans found out that me, my sister and mother are registered for residency in Warsaw and in December 1939 or in January 1940 they resettled us to Warsaw.

The grandma, the aunt and this cousin of mine, Hanka, were allowed to live there probably till 1941, when they were relocated, all these ladies of mine, to a neighbouring estate of Orszymowo. This was also a small manor house and that's where they lived. Unfortunately, the barn got burnt in a fire and they, the Germans, suspected my aunt that she had told her niece Hanka to set this fire. They simply made up this version as to lock her up. I don't know, maybe it was a revenge of Mr Ertbruger, because the aunt was a very beautiful woman, actually I guess you can see that by yourselves, and he must have had some hopes that this acquaintance would develop into something serious. Well, unfortunately, the aunt was a great patriot. She detested the Germans. And she was little diplomatic and her feelings showed. And that is why she paid this with her life. Because they sent her to Fordon [near Bydgoszcz/Bromberg]. First they sentenced her to death for inciting a kid to commit a barn fire. Of course we wrote to Hitler submitting pleas for pardon and Hitler reprieved her and changed it for a life sentence, but she was immediately relocated from Fordon to Oświęcim [Auschwitz], where she stayed at most for three days.

And this whole transport from Fordon almost immediately went to the gas chambers.

CLIP 03

In Warsaw we needed to rent a flat, since our house where we used to live at Kopernika 16, in a very good spot, in the heart of downtown, was destroyed during the wartime military operations. Completely bombed. We rented a flat in Ujazdowskie Alleys. The landlady was a Mrs Kijewska. And that is how our life in occupied Warsaw began.

In Warsaw, naturally, we did not bow to the Germans. This was in the so-called General-Gouvernement. For sure there were no great liberties, but we could go to primary schools. At the time they were called grammar schools. My sisters used to attend the school run by the Sisters of the Holy

Family of Nazareth. My brother had already graduated secondary school, so he didn't go to school. My eldest sister very soon enrolled for some classes at the illegal university, because the academies began the term quite efficiently, in quite no time.

On the other hand my brother soon got in touch with an illegal organization of the leftist type. He always said to the father that he would work on the forefathers' land. I don't know why he chose this direction. Well, anyway a lot of young people at the time had grudges towards our former political system, the period of Piłsudski's rule, because many wrongs were done, there was a lot of poverty. Young people very often did not accept the situation in new Poland and wanted to introduce a more democratic system. That is why my brother joined the PPS (Polish Socialist Party). But not the one under the aegis of the Soviet Union which was called RPPS, the so-called Workers' Socialist Party, but he joined the PPS whose headquarters were in London.

CLIP 04

In my school, the head teacher was an aunt of this boy who went to the Staszic school, there was this very good 16th Zawisza Czarny Warsaw scout team.

Soon after that, the instructors from this team told our head teacher that they wanted to recruit some people in our school. And naturally they started in my class and me and my schoolmates from other classes became members of this team.

Of course, we weren't told what kind of team it was and where its headquarters was. We weren't told anything about this. But they told us a great deal about conspiracy. We didn't know what it meant, but our team leader, Michał Sianorzęcki, who was killed in the Warsaw Uprising, thought that it was very important for us to know what it was all about and told us a lot about it.

But there was democracy in our organization and the troop council decided, because all our instructors belonged to the Home Army, for our troop be part of the Szare Szeregi (The Grey Ranks). So it happened. And me, very soon, I got into the BS, i.e. Combat School. There were boys from more or less 15 years of age till 18. Later you had the GS, i.e. the assault groups with boys between 17, 18 and twenty something.

This is where they had the squads like 'Zośka', 'Parasol', 'Miotła', some sabotage troops. They did not want us in sabotage, we were too young. Our scout authorities made it clear not to get us into sabotage. Naturally, we cheated them a bit with how old we were. Me, being 14, I got into a non-commissioned officer school, because, naturally, I lied that I was 17.

Brother Jerzy's commander found out that I was a scout, that I was being trained to do trailing to do some intelligence activity. They trained in scouting our perceptiveness, our imagination. I had to know all these gateway passages, shortcuts which often came in handy. And my brother's commander reckoned I might be useful for them as a boy in shorts. And since there was also an intelligence cell there, which was supposed to trail various uncertain people, informers, mainly secret agents, informers and so on, well, so they used me very often to be on the look out and wait for the man that they were pursuing.

CLIP 05

The head was this socialist poet, Mr 'Hagen' was his pseudonym. We called him 'Robert'. I guess he was the commander of the group. So he praised me a lot and asked if I wanted to go for a real sabotage job. I, naturally, said yes. 'Then please wait for further orders. And when time comes and the weather is dark enough, then we'll do a job under the Poniatowski bridge.' And he went away. Later I asked my brother Jerzy what kind of action it was supposed to be. He replied, after all I knew about it, that the Germans kept police cars and other military trucks under the bridge. Large lorries.

And we were supposed to set them on fire.

And my brother says: 'You know, listen, we've got this unpleasant situation, but I have to make this sort of present to you. In case they catch you or something and beat the hell out of you, or they massacre you too much so you can't stand it anymore, then here is this vial, a small glass bottle...' – it looked like an injection vial – '...just bite it.' I tell him: 'Don't be silly, I'll get cuts.' And then he says: 'It won't matter to you anyway, as soon as you bite it you die.' Because it was cyanide.

My task, as they later told me was to walk along the pavement in the same way as the watch guard did, the one guarding those trucks. He was quite visible wearing a white sheepskin coat. It was October, but the Germans cared about their soldiers, they dressed them well. And this guard would mostly walk from Dobra street in the direction of the city, then to the right and back. And I was supposed to walk on the opposite side of the street, seeing his white coat. They told me to smoke a cigarette and, watching the spark from my cigarette, they knew where I was and thus were the guard was. And, depending how far away he moved, they were able to plant the firebombs, usually between the wheel and the mudguard. Rubber is flammable. If this catches fire, then there's no stopping it. It worked out fine. Naturally, we were able to see if we succeeded only the following day. I used to go to school at Powiśle, in Sewerynów street and I had this friend there who lived at 3, Trzeciego Maja Alley, that's right opposite the place where those German trucks were stationed. And this friend, Jurek Suchanek from the scout troops and my classmate, told me: 'You're not gonna believe this: last night there was a huge affair in our street! They were shooting around midnight, there was a huge fire under the bridge! Some saboteurs burned the trucks! The Germans were shooting! The whole excitement! The ambulance sirens!' And I ask: 'Well, did they catch those guys?' 'No, I guess not! Anyways, they got really mad because 12 or 13 trucks got burnt.' I thanked him for this account with all my heart, naturally not revealing to him that I had anything to do with that.

CLIP 06

My brother had this job in the intelligence. Mainly he was about pursuing informers and other various dangerous element who might have harmed Poles.

My brother did not tell me what it looked like, but I know that, I don't know if it was his first action or the nth time in a row, anyway, he was directed to execute an informer with whom he was in touch through trading within the ghetto. This informer, they said, was trading furs and the like. Since the Jews were selling out all the valuables they could, some exquisite clothing and so forth that's how he got in touch with him. He needed to get closer to the informer, to talk to him, to stalk him and later shoot him. So you needed these contacts, social ones or others.

He wanted this Marian Zieliński to come at a certain time and in a certain so he could eliminate him. Three of them went there. He lived at 69 Ogrodowa street. I don't remember which floor it was. Although it was my brother, and it seems he was the commander of this group, they made a mess of it. When this Zieliński opened the door they should have shot him and run away. Without coming in and having a talk.

Jerzy drew his pistol and then Zieliński opened a drawer and drew his gun and fired a couple of rounds at Jerzy. The other mate of my brother's was shot in the hand. Instead of shooting back, one can do it with the other hand, as they were told to eliminate him, this mate just turned round and rushed away. Enraged, Zieliński saw Jerzy lying wounded or dead and ran downstairs, shooting at this mate. He simply lost his nerve and that brought him to death, because the third man was standing in the gateway, he was the smartest of them, this Andrzejczak. I met him beforehand, because a couple of months before I had the pleasure to work with him on a sabotage job.

Andrzejczak waited, drew his pistol, because he heard somebody shooting and approaching. So with the gun in his hand he waited until the two appeared. One was his friend, running away with a wounded hand; he shouted: 'I'm hit and 'Ralf' is dead

I guess!' So Andrzejczak yelled: 'Fetch the horse cab!' and waited for the other one.

Zieliński, with a gun still smoking, was chasing the first one. Andrzejczak aimed and Zieliński aimed at Andrzejczak too, shots were fired almost simultaneously and Andrzejczak hit him. Zieliński did not hit him. The first one brought a horse cab – there were no taxis then, these were only for Germans. They got into the horse cab and escaped. I was told this story by one of my brother's friends, but, unfortunately, he told this to me not until July, and it all happened on 19 March 1943.

My brother was taken by a German ambulance to the Szucha street Gestapo headquarters. Zieliński was also taken by the same ambulance and both men, so they say, died in it.

At that time informers, the so called secret agents or provocateurs were harming the resistance groups heavily, in the illegal army troops, the later Home Army and so forth, so you had to liquidate such men. Also many women were shot by the soldiers of the underground. Women who were at the

Gestapo's services, at the German's services, they had to die. I think it was necessary and right. This was war, the invader was uncompromising, a great many people were dying. In concentration camps, in the streets. Many people were arrested. And once we knew who was to blame for that, well, then this somebody had to be liquidated immediately. And that's what we did.

CLIP 07

In 1943, through my scout time leaders, I got into the Home Army. So, unfortunately, I wasn't fighting with my friends from scout times in the Warsaw Uprising, because I was already a Home Army soldier, stationed at the 7th Infantry regiment called 'Garluch' at Okęcie.

It turns out that the commander of the regiment, major 'Wysocki', it was his pseudonym, his real name Babiarez, found out that the Germans had made a lot of fortifications at the airport. Probably he did not know that before. They had collected a huge load of arms, machine guns and so on. Our military, the Home Army had very few weapons, actually none, we just had these grenades and our platoon had two machine guns from the WWI, without the feeders. I mean you had to insert each bullet separately into the barrel, because otherwise there was no shooting, because we didn't have those clips which work as magazines for the bullets. And the commander of the regiment, at 4 o'clock gave an order not to attack those hangars. But I don't know why this order was not given at 1 or 2 o'clock. And the 'W' hour (the hour of attack) was at 5 o'clock. The order brought by the liaison officer got there, but at 17.30, it was too late. The attack was carried out by a group of barely armed men from the 'Kuba' battery.

Within half an hour 125 men were killed. I bear personal grudges towards the commander of the regiment that he had not given the order not to attack at least an hour earlier.

After all he knew there were no phones so the orders had to be carried on foot. And often you couldn't carry them, because you ran up into a patrol or something. So it took time. So you send not just one messenger, but a few at various times. Yet that's how it ended. And that's why the regiment got disbanded and was ordered to save their souls. Who believes in God is supposed to save himself. Either we got through to Warsaw on our own or to the Kampinos Forest or other forests. So we chose, because when this order to disband reached us, my commander and friend, cadet 'Witold' wanted to shoot himself. Then lieutenant 'Andrzej', the commander of this company grabbed his sten, I took him by the hands and told him: 'What, are you gone mad, cadet?! The war is just beginning and you want to commit suicide?! There will still be chances for you to get shot five times!' So he stayed. He died later on. He never returned from guerrilla fighting. I managed to survive.

CLIP 08

So we got into the Chojnów forests and there we joined a guerrilla unit 'Lance'. This was a squad that came from the Zamość region. Pretty well armed. And that's where we started our guerrilla life.

Together with 'Lance' we crossed the Pilica river. Because I could ride, and somebody had just died from the horseback patrol, they put me on a horse and I liked it there in this patrol. You know, for a 15 year old boy who suddenly found himself in a guerrilla squad and was given a horse, it was real fun and pleasure. Of course, it did not soothe my pain that I'm not in the Uprising.

After all my sisters were there, my mother stayed in Warsaw too, and my grandma as well. And me, so far without an injury... nothing happened to me. I'm in the guerrilla troop, nothing much happening, we keep marching on. Moving away from Warsaw.

That's how things looked. Having crossed the Pilica we reached a village, probably Rozwady, where a large guerrilla group was stationed in a forest, around a thousand soldiers. The 25th Piotrków Infantry Regiment. That is where 'Lanca' decided to join this unit, because 'Lanca' was a small group. Just around 150 people. The 25th Regiment was quite a big unit. It was a regiment, a thousand people. And that's where 'Lanca', allegedly, wanted to join. They gave us a warm welcome, they even gave us pay. Yet the very first night 'Lanca' ordered to saddle up horses, pack the wagons and he retreated from the unit, God knows where.

In fact, he just took the pay and ran away. The good thing was that our commander, lieutenant 'Osuch' was on friendly terms with the commander of the regiment in Włodzimierz, because before the war they were together in light artillery in

Włodzimierz and he supported us and the major accepted us in the regiment after all this. That's how it was. In this regiment we were securing its position in the village of Mechlin. For almost a month. But after this time we were relocated to another place, a very bad one, because it was close to a road, where, in the nearby forester's lodge the guarding guerrillas were stationed. It ended sadly, because the Germans attacked. It was too close to the road and these people died. Yet we luckily were left unharmed.

Nobody attacked us. Contrary to this, in the Mechlin village, where we stayed for almost a month, they organized a sweep operation, attacking us with all the forces of Kalmucks, those Vlasov followers from the RONA and so on. You know, these Soviet troops which were taken prisoner by the Germans and then incorporated in the German army.

The Germans mainly used them to liquidate the guerrillas, the Warsaw Uprising and these people showed incredible cruelty. These were savage people. So they attacked the Stefanów village, where the 25th regiment was stationed, nearby there was the village of Gałki, where the 72nd Regiment was, a smaller one, around 500 people. So both these regiments fought a whole day battle with the Germans, but probably 11 of our guys got shot there and the others somehow saved their souls. Nothing special happened.

CLIP 09

After leaving Stefanów we moved to the Białaczow forests and there lieutenant 'Osuch' came to me saying they were collecting a group of soldiers who survived the Warsaw Uprising and were joining various guerrilla groups and there were many of such groups in nearby forests. And if I wanted to participate in a group like that. I agreed, naturally. So he took me in, there were ten persons in this group and we headed in the direction of Nowe Miasto, I think. On the way we found out pretty well who was where. We had this messenger 'Malina', in the village of Bieliny, who knew everything going on in the vicinity and this 'Malina' told us of this large unit which was searching for a much larger one. There were some 150 people under the command of lieutenant 'Lech', Stanisław Degórski. This was a unit from the Lublin region. How did they end up here? First, allegedly, they reached Kampinos, and later, after the Kampinos group got defeated near Jaktorow they moved to our forests. And they established contact with us. With this unit we fought at śdŜary, near Drzewica.

Two people died there. Kalmucks attacked us there. It was a chance meeting. A shootout ensued and two good men died. After this action people regretted so much that they died. Two days later some mines exploded when they dropped out of a wagon. The next wagon rode on them and they exploded. Two more men were wounded. People got mad. Nearby the 'Szary' unit was stationed. They did not want to return to the 25th regiment, they just made this gathering that they are joining the ... Each platoon had its own representatives and they demanded from the command to agree their access to the 'Szary' unit. Well, naturally, if 'Szary' agreed. So we sent a messenger to 'Szary', 'Szary' said yes. He accepted us into his unit. That's how I became a soldier of the 3rd regiment of the Polish Legions under the command of 'Szary'.

I wasn't a long time in this unit, because the Russian front was approaching, they were already on the line of the Vistula, and the Germans wanted to get rid of the guerrillas and they sent to our forests these Kalmuck troops, these prisoners. The RONA and Kamiński's troops. On 5 November we were staying at the village of Boków and on the 4th the 25th Regiment had a fight in Boków. It was a very big action, a lot of people died there. Both ours and the Germans. On the 5 Nov this onslaught moved towards us.

CLIP 10

We were staying in these shacks, pretty far from the village. And they attacked us there. I was very ill at the time, because I had been marching for a long time and I had some grazes on the leg. All of us wore calf-length boots, and our legs were eaten by lice.

This was the time when you could take your boots off, taking time to scratch your feet stung by lice. It resulted of course in festering wounds and infections. I had high fever, I couldn't walk.

The commander took out the maps and tried to figure out how to get away from this oppression. He spread these maps and I saw how calm he was. Totally. After all, the cannonade around meant we

were going to fight. And he was just lying there calm, on this blanket looking at the maps. Apparently trying to get us all away from this trap, how to find the best way.

We had this cadet on horseback. We asked him to ride to the left, to the right to this large forest to find the best getaway out of the forest, without these Vlasov soldiers. But he tried a couple of times in various directions and each time he came saying we were surrounded and there was no way for us to...

All of a sudden one man says: 'Guys, let's think, we need to do something. What?' I said: 'What the heck, let's just stay here, we won't just sell ourselves cheap. That's it.'

It's the end anyway... Well, but people try to save themselves to the very end. And there were these thickets there. Thorn bushes or something, like the one Lord Jesus had on his head when they crossed him, the crown. There was no chance to get inside.

Somehow they managed to do it by pushing the bushes with their guns. One would hold the thickets and another one would get there underneath these sharp bushes. So we got inside these bushes and reckoned no one would find us there and get us. And inside we made this kind of clearing large enough for us, like these two rooms.

They chased all of us out from the bushes, as more of us got there, and took us prisoner. I was leaving as the last one. I was brought up in this God-fearing patriotic fashion that I couldn't accept it... What will my sisters say?! My mother?! Me taken a prisoner! I get out and I see this pile of our arms lying there, because these Vlasov guys told us to leave it there. This pile lying there and my friends standing in a row and the Vlasov guys tying their hands at the backs. When I saw it, I hid my head and backed under this juniper thicket or something, a low growing one and got underneath, kneeling. My sten with a missing cartridge was between my legs, I leant on my elbows and just waited for things to quiet down. These Vlasov soldiers tied my friends and you could hear them yelling. As they moved on, they plucked up their courage yelling:

Hurrah! Hurrah! Plucking their courage. Besides, they were totally drunk. All of them. If anyone of them died we used to check what weapons they had and they always had their canteens filled with liquor. So I heard these voices moving away and it got pitch dark. Suddenly somebody started whistling 'Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła' [Polish anthem]. After some time I whistled back. Then someone said: 'How many are you?' I said 'Just me.' 'There are four of us', I think, he said. So there were four more smart guys like me who hid in the thickets. Somebody had matches just to check whether we knew each other or not. The 'Szary unit had around 500 people. So it was hard to know everyone. For the most part these were boys from the Vilnius region. Because they were staying in Kampinos, and the 'Dolina' group with Vilnius and Navahrudak guys joined the Kampinos group. There were a lot of them and they joined us. That's why there were so many guys from the Vilnius region. I asked them later on where they wanted to return, where to go, what to do now, they said: 'We're heading to Vilnius.

We're returning.'

He simply lost his way. I marched on, said goodbye to those Vilnius guys. I reckoned I had to reach some village to find some help. I was so tired and ill, with this fever, that I had to find some place to lie down.

CLIP 11

'There is a word: the underground. What does it mean? No one knows.

It's a heavenly attraction, rather poor board.

An illusion, air, ether, mist?

Yet quite essential it is!

Cause the underground is the underground!

That's the bread of our lives!

It is fab, it's bliss,

to carry an MG!

(MG is a gun)

An ordinary guerrilla looks as follows:

He's quiet, he's nice, kind, nothing particular at all!

Talking, he's a clever guy,
He'll check up under the bed for a spy.
The underground, the underground!
That's the bread of our lives!
It is fab, it's bliss,
to carry an MG!
Once some fella, can't say which one,
Was left at night to clean the gun.
He released the trigger, a rumble ruined the couch
The neighbours, as they stood, in fear would crouch!
Now whole of Warsaw knows
Every single kid and watchman,
Shoot, not to lose one's touch
Why bother with the couch?'