

Healthcare System of the ZWZ-AK (Union for Armed Struggle, Home Army) in the Stanisławowski Region

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Summary:

The article discusses the formation and activity of the Polish Underground Organisations' healthcare system in Stanisławowski province which was one of the most difficult regions for the Polish community during the WWII. They experienced not only terror and repression of Soviet and German occupation authorities, but also hostile attitude of Ukrainian nationalists.

Key words: second world war, Soviet occupation, German occupation, Polish underground organisations, healthcare system.

“The Marshal's leading notion is to continue the War with the Germans using units present in the country and to use as many units not yet engaged in the battle, or even those already engaged, but located nearby the Romania-Hungary border, by ordering them to travel across Romania and Hungary to France and to join the Alliance forces, so that he could continue the war and fight together with the Allies side by side. (...) The land units which had previously received an order to swim down the rivers to the area preceding the Romanian bridges, are now trying to find the shortest route to Romania or Hungary. The same applies to the unengaged military units. The air force is concentrating by air or optionally by land” [16].

These words were written down by Lieutenant Colonel Józef Jaklicz, II Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces, during a speech by Marshal Edward Śmigły-Rydz in the morning of 17 September 1939 during a briefing with the officers of the General Staff, after receiving information about the invasion of the Red Army on Poland. The

briefing took place in Kołomyja, where the General Staff of the Polish Army was located at that moment. At the night between 17 and 18 September, the Polish President, Government and General Staff of the Polish Army moved from the territory of Stanisławowski province to Romania [8].

The fact that Stanisławowski province, also called “Pokucie”, was a borderland, it gained special importance during the Second World War. Romania was the only neighbouring country which the Polish government was allied with. Thus, tens of thousands of Polish soldiers could travel across its territory when heading west. The Romanian routes were also used by couriers of the Polish Government-in-exile to reach its branches in the occupied country and in backward direction – from Poland to the west. Due to that fact, the countries being at war with Poland increased the number of soldiers guarding the border with Romania. They used all possible means to counteract the formation of the Polish Armed Forces on the west and the activity of the armed underground on the territory of Poland. They also

carefully checked the territory of the Stanisławowski province. The Poles living there were subject to terror and extermination. The local Ukrainian community was encouraged to participate in the War against Poles. Thus, a great number of Poles lost their lives. Many had to flee to save their lives [3].

By the end of 1939, over 100 thousand Polish soldiers had crossed that region to reach Hungary and Romania. Many of them were breaking through in an extremely difficult conditions, i.e. after the Soviet military had taken control of the region. They also experienced huge hostility from the Ukrainians who constituted a majority in the region [15, 20].

In Kołomyja, the Ukrainians took over the authority as early as on 18 September. Their main goal was to act against the units of the Polish Army which were still stationing there. On that day, the Ukrainian authorities took about 10 thousand Polish soldiers and 600 officers prisoner and handed them over to the Soviets later on. Even more, they took over the centre of the town and blocked the road leading to the Kut city, which the General Staff had travelled when heading to Romania [4].

In that situation it became crucial to organise help for Polish soldiers crossing the territory of the Stanisławowski province. It was a difficult task as few Poles inhabited that region. Among the three pre-war provinces of Eastern Małopolska region, Stanisławowski was the one with the lowest percentage of Poles. During the National Census in the Second Polish Republic in 1931, only 22.4% of the region's inhabitants claimed to use Polish language, whereas 68.9% - Ukrainian. When one takes religion as an indicator of nationality: 16.6% claimed to be of Roman Catholic belief and 72.9% Greek Catholic, so the dominance of Ukrainians was even more visible. They inhabited mainly villages. Poles were more numerous only in a small number of villages in that province. In towns and cities, however, the Jews constituted the majority, comprising 40-45% of inhabitants. Poles were the second largest ethnic group in cities (about 35%), the third were Ukrainians – between 18 and 28% [11].

Under the Soviet Occupation

The unfavourable for Poles ethnic situation in the Stanisławowski province made it difficult to organise an underground resistance against the Soviets,

who annexed it in 1939. They also had to struggle with the Ukrainian nationalists. Before the War, they formed a military and political organization called the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), with one of the main goals being to remove the Poles living in the region of Eastern Małopolska along with the culture they had been creating for centuries – mostly material – like the cities of Kołomyja, Stryj and Stanisławów (now Ivano-Frankivsk in Ukraine) [8].

The OUN was established in 1929, yet quite quickly, between 1930 and 1934, it was already responsible for an organized wave of terror on the territory of Poland. It murdered Polish politicians, assaulted Polish national institutions, burnt properties. It grew especially in those regions of Galicia (Eastern Europe), where the Ukrainians outnumbered Poles the most. Stanisławowski province was one of that regions.

The factor which made the situation even more dire for the Poles, was the fact that at the beginning of September 1939 many young Poles were conscripted to serve in the army and left the area. Some of them became part of the 11th Infantry Division of the Karpaty Army, which was being formed at that moment. Later on they were hunted down and repressed by the Soviet occupation authorities and also by numerous and well organized groups of Ukrainian nationalists. Members of the OUN had been murdering Poles living in that region and soldiers of the Polish Army since the first day of War. Many of them had undergone prior combat and sabotage training in the Third Reich, where they learnt how to fight Polish military units behind the front lines. In the first days of September 1939 they were transported to the territory of Stanisławowski province and began fighting the Poles, while the German forces were moving in the same direction at the same time.

The first attacks on Polish military units were carried out on 10 September. The following day, the OUN called its members to disorganise the backs of Polish units by sabotage. Anti-Polish operations by the Ukrainians gained momentum after 17 September 1939. On that day, many soldiers and officers of the Polish Army tried to reach Hungary and Romania through mountain trails on the territory of the Stanisławowski province. However, they were often caught by the Soviet soldiers and the Ukrainians collaborating with them. One

of the caught ones was Gen. Władysław Anders, shot on 28 September by Ukrainian inhabitants of the Jesionka Stasiowo near Turka and was handed over to the NKVD [1].

Hostile attitude of the Ukrainians towards the Polish soldiers made the latter avoid coming back to their hometowns after the September campaign had finished. It applied also to physicians. Those who had been conscripted to serve in the 11th Infantry Division of the Karpaty Army reached Hungary and then France. Among them were: major MD Tadeusz Daszkiewicz, captain MD Piotr Frączak and captain MD Leon Bazala [5].

The main transport routes of Polish soldiers to Hungary led through Stanisławów and Nadwórna and also through Stryj and Dolina. To Romania the route led through Kołomyja. In the face of danger, the Poles living in those cities started organising their own groups – kept secret from the Soviet authorities – which helped Polish refugees in all possible ways. First of all they helped them walk the local mountain trails safely to the southeast border of the Second Polish Republic. In this incredibly difficult terrain they organized refuges and provided them with medications, food and – in late autumn and winter – warm clothes. Hundreds of people were in such groups, doing enormous and vital work. Their role has not been fully appreciated so far.

It should be pointed out that the compact military units which walked through there in the middle of September 1939, were in need of only a modest support which they received. In a memoir of a dweller of Stanisławów we can find the following sentence:

*“We began to offer the soldiers bread and whatever there was at home. The Ursuline Sisters set up a whole buffet with coffee and tea. No soldier wanted to accept food. Drinks – yes.
– We are not hungry! We have our own provisions! Keep the food for yourselves, you will need it soon.”* [13].

The above words show the involvement of all the social circles in helping Polish soldiers and their great generosity. It should be stressed that in the Polish society, especially in the Eastern Borderlands, there was a tradition of taking great care of one's own soldiers. It started as a result of fights lasting for centuries in that region.

Creation of the Union for Armed Struggle (ZWZ) Healthcare System

At the end of 1939, on the territory of Stanisławowski province, structures of a nationwide underground organisation – Union for Armed Struggle – started to form. They were started by emissaries from Lviv, where it had already been up and running. They contacted mainly members of groups giving help to soldiers heading west because they were the ones who had already declared readiness to become part of the underground and they accepted the inherent martyrdom [22].

It was then when the first structures of the ZWZ medical service started shaping along with its staff. The genesis of this service was also associated with spontaneously formed groups providing help. It was vital to provide first aid to the refugees travelling through that region. A long walk in a demanding terrain often resulted in injuries.

Therefore, the organisers of the help groups made efforts to include trusted doctors in them. It was best if the initiator of the group was a doctor himself. One of them was MD Stefan Hoszowski from Stanisławów. He played a significant role in preparing the youth of his city to participation in the War and subsequent occupation. He fully devoted himself to helping Polish soldiers and was arrested and repressed for doing so. It seems that he is the one to whom we should ascribe the role of the organiser of the first healthcare system structures of ZWZ in the Stanisławów district. He was one of the youngest doctors in that region and he was perfect for that position. Before the War he engaged himself a lot in social activity, mainly as an instructor and educator of the youth to whom he became a role model in terms of patriotic devotion. This all made it easier for him to organise agile youth groups helping soldiers travelling westward between autumn 1939 and Spring 1941.

He was born in 1906 and received his doctor's diploma in 1935. Soon after he started work in Stanisławów. [17] His social and professional profile was vividly depicted by Tadeusz Olszański, who had known and remembered him well. In his memoirs he wrote: “Doctor Stefan Hoszowski came to Stanisławów in the mid 30s. He was like godsent, I mean from the big world. He had studied medicine in Bologna and Padua. He spoke many languages. He was handsome and incredibly helpful.

He had offers to work in Warsaw and Poznań, but he chose Eastern Borderlands because he was born there. He was socially engaged – he was the doctor of a boy scout regiment in Stanisławów and the “Rewera” sport club [14].

When the War broke out, he was conscripted to serve in the Polish Military medical service as he was an officer in reserve. Soon after coming home he engaged in underground activity together with his brother Roman – a graduate of the Technical University of Lviv (Politechnika Lwowska) – who was working in the Forestry on the territory of the Stanisławowski province. Their villa in Jaremcze became one of the refugee and courier shipping points to Hungary. There they received all the help they needed. The help was provided by the villa’s hosts and senior boy scouts from Stanisławów, but also priests and the youth living nearby Jaremcze. Their secret meetings were held in churches [14].

They continued their activity until Spring of 1941, which proves that group members, but most of all its leaders, had great organisation skills. That is when the local Ukrainians become aware of their underground activity and reported them to the Soviet authorities. The Hoszowscy brothers were put in NKVD prison in Stanisławów, where they were brutally beaten with batons, to such an extent that Stefan did not recognise his own brother on the prison yard – he was so covered in blood, swelled and hard to recognise. Roman probably took all the blame on himself. He was sentenced to 15 years in a forced labour camp (Gulag) and sent to Workuta. In Stefan’s case, a pivotal role played the money collected by his family and finding somebody who accepted the bribe and allowed him to be released from prison [14].

MD Józef Franciszek Łagan was also a member of the underground organisation providing help to refugees in Stanisławów. He was born in the city in 1914, but studied medicine at Poznan University of Medical Sciences. After receiving his doctor title he returned to Stanisławów. He worked in the Social Insurance Company and the local hospital. He participated in the September campaign of 1939. After returning home, together with his brother Jan, he took up underground activity. They both engaged themselves mainly in providing medical help to soldiers travelling through that area and supplying shipping points in medical devices and medications. They were

arrested by the NKVD on 19 March 1940 in their parents’ apartment. During interrogations in the Stanisławowski prison they were tortured and beaten. The repressions were so horrible that Jan Mieczysław Łagan died in consequence. MD Józef Łagan was sentenced to death and transported to a correctional camp in Krasnoyarsk Krai (Syberia), where due to harsh living and working conditions he died in 1941. He was only 27 then. The same year, their whole family was deported from Stanisławów also to Krasnoyarsk Krai [6].

Ruthless repressions of the NKVD and a system of informers in Stanisławów developed by its officers made it impossible for underground activity to develop in that region. The early structures of ZWZ were formed only in Kołomyja. In the beginning of 1940 a Command of the ZWZ in the region of Kołomyja was set up, which aim was to expand the underground activity on the whole territory of Kołomyja powiat (second level of local government administration in Poland). The head of the healthcare system in that Command was MD Mieczysław Szajna, who worked in that city. He was born in 1905 and received his diploma in 1929. [17] In March 1940 he was arrested by the NKVD together with all the other members of the regional Command. [13] However, he managed to survive the repressions [17].

In May 1940, in the region of Kołomyja, Lieutenant Colonel Władysław Smereczyński – who came from Lviv – started his underground activity. His job was to organise and command the ZWZ in the Stanisławów region. In different cities in that region, contact points were set up where he could safely stay and meet with local underground members. One of such places was in the apartment of MD Kazimierz Robaczewski in Worochta (Vorochna) [14].

He did not manage, though, to organise permanent structures of ZWZ in the Stanisławów region. He did not even set up his own Command. He did not appoint anyone to head the healthcare system in the region either. Together with a handful of co-operators he formed only rudimentary structures in some bigger cities.

The Soviet authorities that took over the region in September 1939, made great efforts to prevent forming of the Polish underground. They regarded the intellectuals as the initiators. They tried to

eliminate those perceived as particularly dangerous using various methods. First of all, they strived to exterminate Polish Army officers, both professional and in reserve, including doctors. In Autumn 1939, many of them were interned and in Spring 1940 murdered in Katyń, Charków and Miednoje (Mednoye). Among the murdered doctors of the region were: Andrzej Pelczar (director of the hospital in Stryj, murdered in Charków), Mieczysław Adalbert Dąbrowski (in Charków), Franciszek Krzysztof Zieliński (in Charków), Szymon Schimel (in Katyń), Salomon Weinbach (in Katyń) [2].

A form of a mass elimination of the Polish intellectuals, including healthcare staff, were four mass deportations to Siberia and Kazakhstan. In Stanisławowski province, more than 20 thousand Poles were deported [12].

It is hard to estimate the number of doctors and other healthcare staff among them. It seems there were many of them. It was when the number of staff of Polish origin substantially decreased in medical facilities across the Stanisławowski province. One of them was Captain MD Aleksander Jakub Wasilewski, the head of the Health Centre in Kołomyja. He graduated from the University of Tartu, faculty of medicine and received his diploma in 1916. When the First World War broke out, he was conscripted to the Russian army. When the revolution in Russia started, he participated in the formation of Gen. Lucjan Żeligowski's divisions. After returning to country in 1918, he served in the Polish Army. He was the chief doctor in the 14th lancer regiment (14 Pułk Ułanów Jazłowieckich). He received the War Order of Virtuti Militari for his outstanding engagement in the battle. He was demobilized at the end of 1921. In later years he engaged in social activity apart from being a doctor. He worked in the Reserve Officers Association, Folk School Association and in the Polish Social Service. In 1939 he participated in the WWII. A year later he was deported to Kazakhstan. When General Władysław Anders was organizing the Polish Army in the Soviet Union, he joined its ranks. As its officer and a doctor, he died in undisclosed circumstances at the end of 1944 in Loreto, Italy [6].

In 1940 a pharmacist – PhD Stefan Stenzel – was deported from Kołomyja to Kazakhstan together with his family. He was an owner of a pharmacy in the town and also the “Mariacka” pharmacy in Lviv located on the Mariacki square where he also

had a factory producing chemicals and cosmetics. When after two years in Kazakhstan he heard about the formation of General Anders's army, he joined it. He became the head of the Central Medical Supply. Unfortunately, as a result of extreme emaciation he contracted typhus after a few days and died. He was buried on the military graveyard in Yangiyo'l (Jangijul – Uzbekistan) [6].

The deportations had significantly weakened the Polish community in the Pokucie region. Moreover, they strengthened the potential of an already incredibly strong Ukrainian population. It made the underground activity of the Polish community even more difficult. Also mutual aid, rescue and sanitary activities were hampered. Among the Poles deported from the region by the Soviet authorities there were many women who had been trained before the War to serve as medical assistants and support for the medical staff in war times. Their disappearance caused the medical sections in facilities of the Polish underground to be sparse and of little effectiveness.

Another form of repressions of Polish intellectuals – including doctors – used by the Soviet authorities were those experienced by MD Stanisław Tomaszek. He was born in Lviv in 1890 and studied medicine there. Yet when the First World War broke out, he was conscripted to the Austrian army. In 1915 he was taken prisoner by the Russians. Two years later he joined the Siberian Division (Polish 5th Siberian Rifle Division) and in its ranks he fought the bolsheviks (Soviets). After the Division was defeated he was taken prisoner by the bolsheviks, but he managed to escape. He settled in Krasnojarsk but returned to Poland in 1922. He received his Doctor of Medicine diploma in 1925. After three years he moved to Stanisławów, where he started work as a doctor of the Railways. He also engaged in social activities, e.g. he was a member of the Folk School Association. He also founded the Polish Lesser Nobility Association (Towarzystwo Szlachty Zagrodowej) which promoted Polish traditions among the countryside dwellers. It was probably the reason why he was arrested by the NKVD as early as in October 1939. At the beginning he was imprisoned in Stanisławów, but later transported to Russia, where he was in many different prisons. He died on 30 November 1940 in a prison nearby Stalingrad [6].

An exemplification of the tragedy of Polish doctors in the region was the fate of MD Stanisław

Kaliniewicz. Before the War he headed the Public Hospital in Kołomyja. After the occupation of the city began in 1939 he moved to Tarnów, where he started a job in the Municipal Hospital as the head of the surgical ward. In the middle of 1940 he was approved by the Germans to fill the position of the head of the hospital. When in 1943 he went for holiday to Kołomyja, he was murdered by the Ukrainian nationalists [10].

The medical staff was also among the thousands of Poles held in prisons located across the Stanisławowski province. After the German-Soviet war broke out on 22 June 1941 they were simply murdered. The NKVD officers usually killed them in their prison cells by throwing a bundle of grenades inside. Only in the prison in Stanisławów over 2500 Poles were murdered [14].

Sometimes doctors died as a result of coincidence. We can read about such an event in memoirs of one of the city's dwellers: "On the day the Soviets were leaving Stanisławów, doctor [Stanisław – Z. J.] Hamerski came to the outpatient clinic and walked into his office. On that day the cleaner was tidying the office. She was dusting everything very carefully and while doing so she took the Stalin's and Lenin's portraits off the wall - portraits which were obligatory in every public place. She simply wanted to clean them. In that very moment the NKVD officers rushed into the office. Seeing that the portraits were taken off the wall, they shot doctor Hamerski on the spot" [13].

In anti-Polish operations, the Soviet authorities were supported by the Ukrainians and Jews with communist views among whom there were also members of medical staff. For instance, in Kołomyja during the encroaching of the Soviet military, a "Workers and Farmers Red Guard" was formed, which was organized by a dentist – Maksymilian Alweil. Later on he organized healthcare in those regions on Soviet terms [12].

The Ukrainian nationalists did not halt their anti-Polish campaign. The Soviet authorities were striving to remove the Poles from the Eastern Małopolska region and the activists of the Ukrainian nationalist organisations had exactly the same goal. Some of them, driven by a desire to remove the Poles, took up various jobs in the Soviet administrative and police institutions. Only the activists

at the forefront of the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalist (OUN) were actually repressed by the Soviets – also by means of deportation. Some of them left the area and moved to the General Government to avoid repressions [12].

The Soviet authorities repressed mainly those Polish doctors who held high positions in the healthcare system. After their removal, they filled those positions with doctors of Jewish origin and doctors brought from the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. They started doing so after they noticed a tradition in that region whereby doctors played important roles in political and social life. That tradition took root and developed thanks to MD Gustaw Karol Dobrucki from Stanisławów and MD Tadeusz Targowski from Stryja. Both of them, by their commitment to social and political life, gained the trust of the community of the province and became its leaders. A proof of that was their election to the parliament of the Second Polish Republic in 1922.

Gustaw Dobrucki was born in 1873 in Miazuń, a small village in the Dolina powiat, located in the Stanisławowski province. He graduated from secondary school in 1890 in Stanisławów where he received his diploma (=GCSE). Later on, he studied medicine at the Jagiellonian University. After receiving a Doctor of Medicine diploma he settled in Stanisławów and took a job in the Public hospital. Apart from work he was very politically and socially active. He was the President of the National-Democratic Party and the editor-in-chief of the "Rewera" weekly. Between 1912 and 1914 he was also the Chairman of the "Strzelec" hunting association in the city.

In the First World War he served in the Austrian army, initially fighting on the Italian front. At the end of the War he returned to the region of Karpaty and joined the Supreme National Committee. After the breakdown of the Austria-Hungary he participated in political and military efforts to keep the Eastern Małopolska region within the Polish borders. In Stanisławów he set up a Civic Committee, which organized Polish administrative authorities in the city. At the beginning of 1919 he was imprisoned by the Ukrainians. After the Polish military units entered the city in May 1919, he became the starost (village headman) of the Stanisławowski powiat. He carried out the function until 1927. During that period he was also the President of a Polish-American War Orphans Committee.

In 1920 he became the head of the Public Hospital in Stanisławów. He stepped down in 1922, when he became a Polish senator of the PSL “Piast” political party. In January 1927 he became the Minister of Religious Beliefs and Public Enlightenment in Józef Piłsudski’s government. He carried out his function until the end of June 1928. He moved to Warsaw the same year. He died in 1943 and was buried in the Powązki graveyard in Warsaw [19].

Social and political work was the basis of an equally impressive political career of MD Tadeusz Targowski. He was born in 1886 in Sambir . He studied medicine in Vienna where he received his Doctor of Medicine diploma in 1912. During his studies he was responsible for the organisation of the Sokol movement. In 1905 he became a member of the PSL “Piast” political party. During the Polish-Soviet War he headed the military hospital in Stryj. In 1922 he became a member of the parliament of the PSL “Piast” political party [9].

Their political and social commitment was an example for other doctors working in the Stanisławowski province during the existence of the Second Polish Republic and the occupation. However, the Soviet authorities had significantly limited the participation of Polish doctors in social events by means of terror and repressions.

Under the German occupation

Extermination, terror and persecutions, also of the medical staff in the Pokucie region, were even more severe during the German occupation.

At the end of June 1941 after the Soviets had been forced out, the Hungarian army entered the region. They were German allies but with a positive attitude towards the Polish community. Their short-lived reign was a period of respite for the Poles. It should be underlined that thanks to the Hungarian soldiers, the Poles avoided repressions prepared for them by the Ukrainian nationalist. Hungarians’ attitude to the Polish and Jewish people was correct. Knowing what fate was awaiting the Jews under the German occupation, they facilitated their escape to their own country. One of the co-organisers was MD Tadeusz Olszański, who collaborated with members of the ZWZ. He had a good relationship with the Hungarians because his wife was one. His son in his account of the events claimed that a few thousand people, mainly Jews

among whom had been many doctors, had crossed the Polish-Hungarian border in July 1941 [13].

The situation of Poles in that region changed on 7 August 1941 when the German took over the administration of the Stanisławowski province. Together with the Ukrainian nationalists they ruthlessly terrorized the Poles. Many times the German security police, accompanied by the Ukrainians, had arrested young men and women who were then transported to Germany as slave workers.

There were also exterminations. As early as in August 1941 at the command of Hans Krüger – the chief of Gestapo (German security police) in Stanisławów – mass arrests of Poles in the city were carried out. The lists of names had been prepared by the Ukrainian nationalists. They covered over 800 people from Stanisławów and surrounding areas. Among those were over 300 members of Polish intellectuals, mainly teachers. There were also seven doctors with their families in that group: Leonard Dąbrowski, Jan Gutt, Adam Hickiewicz, Józef Kochaj, Ludwik Morvay, Erazm Niemczewski, Andrzej Raczyński, and also Mrs Krzywicka, a wife of a doctor who had not been at home on that day. They were all murdered in the so called Black Forest (Czarny Las) near Uhryniv (near Ivano-Frankivsk) [12].

Another wave of arrests and murders swept the city before 11 November 1941. Also this time mainly the intellectuals suffered.

Home Army’s (Armia Krajowa – AK) healthcare system

In order to organise the Poles living there to fight against the occupants, the Central Command of ZWZ in Warsaw sent there a few of its own officers. In December 1941 Captain Rudolf Majewski came to Stanisławów as the one appointed the chief of local Command. In January 1942 Lieutenant Colonel Jan Rogowski also came to Stanisławów and became the chief of ZWZ – later renamed to Home Army (HA) – in the Stanisławów region. The underground started slowly forming in very difficult conditions. The Polish community was sparse, about 160 thousands, of whom 16 thousand were capable of serving in the army. In consequence of Soviet repressions, the number shrank to about 85 thousand. The cruelty and extensiveness of the repressions paralyzed the remaining Poles. Due to

that, a large share of them were not keen on engaging in underground activity.

The most active was the youth. In an organizational report sent to the ZWZ Central Command on 6 May 1942 by the HA regional Command in Lviv (which covered the Stanisławowski region), we read: “The chances of filling the vacancies is bleak because there is a lack of professional officers. Reserve officers have been conscripted into the German military and are not keen on participating in underground activity. The civilians are passive and intimidated. We can count on professional non-commissioned officers in 75% of cases. There are about 120 – 150 of them in every bigger city of the region, such as Kołomyja and Stanisławów, and smaller groups in a few other locations. Moreover, we can count on 90% of the youth from schools. Women are also keen on helping”.

No wonder that in September 1942 there were only about 3 thousand Home Army soldiers in that region. In the organisational structure of the local Command from that period we do not find a position of the head of healthcare. It was still being formed back then. However, as a part of the First Division, a Women Military Service (WSK, *Wojskowa Służba Kobiet*, *Wojskowa Służba Kobiet*) was established, which had one facility. Probably in its ranks was a medical clerk, because in later reports from this local Command it was clear that the best developed section of the WSK was the medical service.

A lack of a doctor in the local Command of that region did not mean that the healthcare was completely ignored there. Situations like these were characteristic for all HA regions in their beginnings. It was enough to have only occasional contacts with doctors working at hospitals and outpatient clinics. In case of a need to give medical help to sick soldiers of the HA, more radical steps were taken, usually open and legal, as such cases were a rarity. There were no fights yet then so there were no wounded. In memoirs of one of the dwellers of Stanisławów it says that his father, MD Tadeusz Olszański, collaborated with the HA as early as in 1942.

Doctors cooperating with the HA were surely more numerous. Generally, the Polish community in the Pokucie region dramatically lacked

doctors. A characteristic feature of pre-war doctors in that region was that most of them were Jewish. The proportion grew even higher during the Soviet occupation reaching 70% of the overall number of doctors. However, the Germans locked them in a ghetto in Stanisławów at the beginning of the occupation and murdered them subsequently.

The Ukrainian population, hostile to Poles and dominant in terms of number, helped the German authorities invigilate the structures of HA. As a result there were constant arrests of the Polish underground members. The biggest wave was at the turn of 1942 and 1943. About two hundred soldiers from different levels of the organisation were seized. A few of them were from the local Command of the region, and among them: the chief – Lieutenant Colonel Rogowski, chief of staff – Captain Majewski and quartermaster – Mieczysław Schimma, who was in charge of the healthcare. A few times more people left the region because they had thought they were at risk of being arrested. Many of them escaped to Hungary. Among them were doctors previously collaborating with the HA. The arrests and flees stymied the organisational and numerical growth of HA in that region. Until the end of the German occupation, no efficiently working Commands, combat units or secondary structures – including healthcare – were formed.

In February 1943 in Lviv, a Restoring Unit of the HA in the Stanisławowski region was set up, with captain Władysław as the chief. By the end of the year, basic organisational units were set up. The chief of healthcare in the region was “Dr Puma” (name unknown). He collected medications and wound dressings. Apart from other equipment, he had 3 sets of surgical tools (small surgery kits) and 2000 wound dressings. He developed a procedure on how to organize and run a district hospital with 250 beds and four field hospitals with 20 beds each. He made efforts to equip them with medications and devices, furniture, working clothes, kitchen and dining utensils, and so on. He also trained the female medical orderlies (there were almost 200 by the beginning of June 1944). They participated in the fights of self-defence units, organized in Polish villages to protect them from the attacks of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA, *Ukraińska Powstańcza Armia*).

The Stanisławowski region of the HA was established and operated in extremely difficult conditions. It was one of the weakest regions in the occupied Poland during the WWII. It also had poorly organized medical services. Its soldiers

were unable to carry out major combat and sabotage operations. However, they played a significant role in self-defence operations, which saved the lives of thousands of Poles living in the Pokucie region who were in danger of attacks by the UPA.

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