

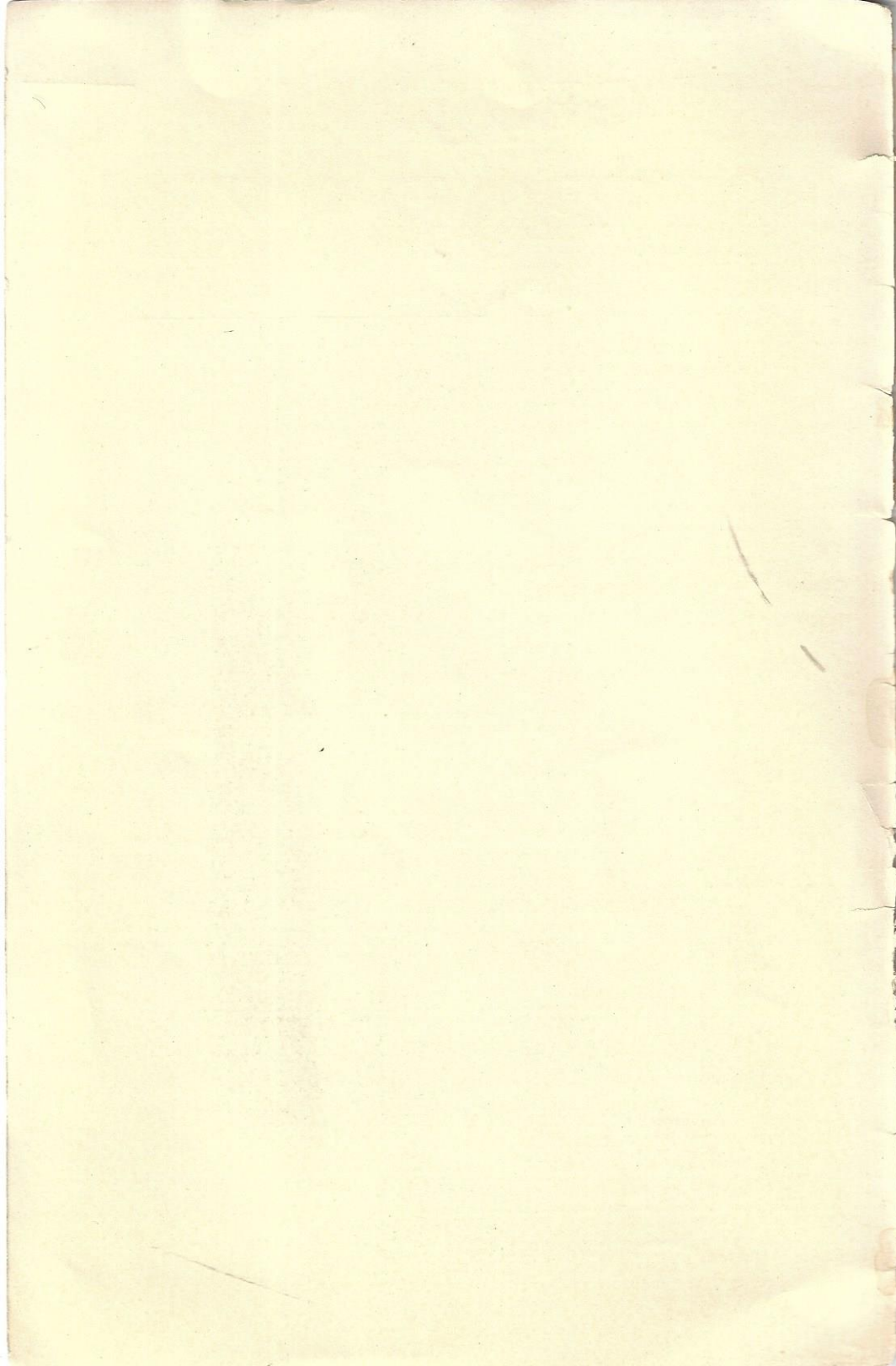
GENERAL SIKORSKI

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BY
F. C. ANSTRUTHER

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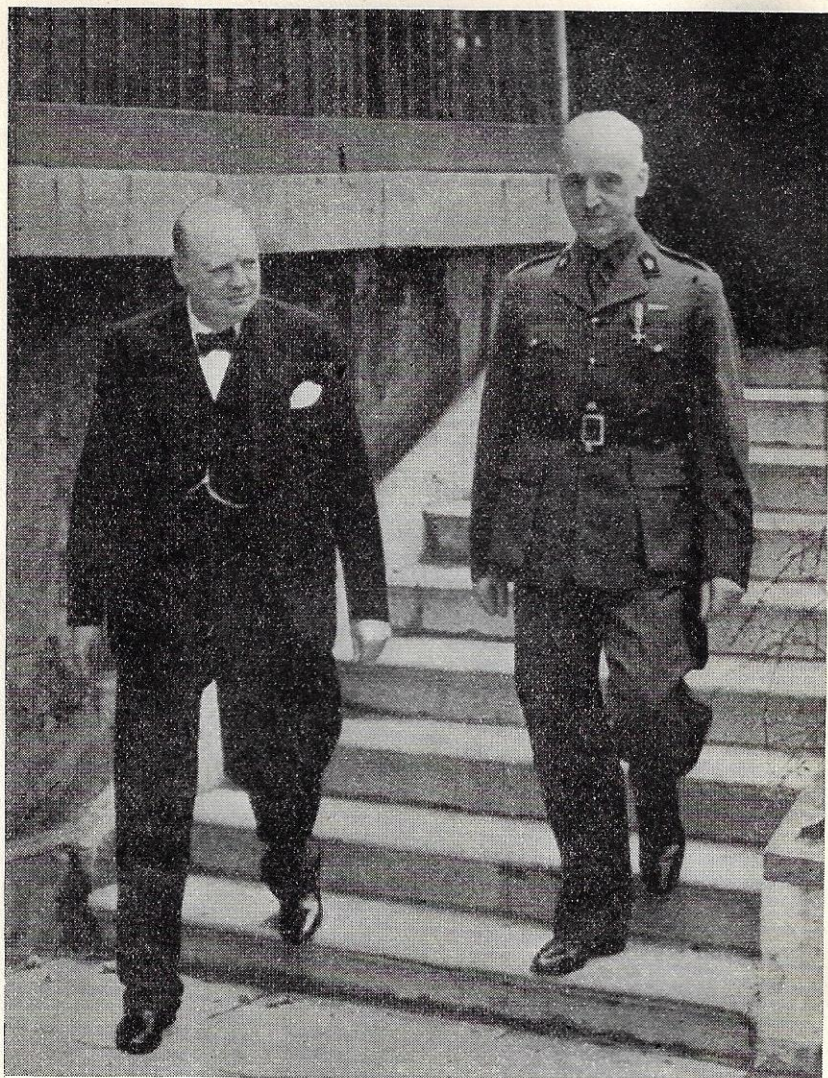
BY

F. C. ANSTRUTHER

with Foreword by
CAPTAIN ALAN GRAHAM, M.P.
and
MR. CHURCHILL'S TRIBUTE
at the end

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General Sikorski with Mr. Churchill after the signing of the Anglo-Polish Military Agreement, August, 1940.

FOREWORD

Twenty-seven years ago Britain's national hero, Field-Marshal Lord Kitchener, while voyaging in the service of his country and the Allied cause, perished at sea. In this war against the same enemy, in July, 1943, a similar fate befell the subject of these pages, Poland's national hero, General Sikorski. Against the background of numbing shock and black grief felt by each of our suffering nations, the greatness of the two men stood out suddenly illumined

“ As stars that shoot along the sky
Shine brightest as they fall from high.”

When Lady Anstruther first wrote of General Sikorski, she had before her the living model, whom we knew and loved, with his charm, his presence, his chivalry and his power of command. Now that he has passed into History, it is his statesman-like vision and his courage, the supreme qualities of leadership, that increasingly reveal themselves before our saddened gaze. Yet his people, the people of John Sobieski and of Kosciuszko and of all the heroic nameless martyrs of occupied Poland to-day, will certainly raise up others to follow Sikorski's inspiring example and to accomplish his constant dream—to lead back his nation to a new Poland, freer, happier and greater than ever before.

“ His soul goes marching on ! ”

ALAN GRAHAM,

M.P. for Wirral.

F. C. ANSTRUTHER.

GENERAL SIKORSKI.

Wladyslaw Sikorski was born on 20th May, 1881, in Southern Poland, the son of a gentleman farmer. The family's estates had been confiscated after the Napoleonic era. His father died when he was a child of three. At the age of fifteen he started to give lessons in order to pay for his own education and he studied in Kraków and later at Lwów Technical University College. Since he lived in Galicia, which was then part of the Austrian Empire, he performed his military service in Vienna and obtained the rank of Second Lieutenant and later Lieutenant of the Reserve. He returned to Lwów where he seriously studied civil engineering. He was a brilliant student, always first in his class.

When Sikorski was a child, the positivist philosophy was uppermost in Poland. Since the 1863 rising, which had failed on account of the patriots' lack of arms and equipment, no further attempts at armed revolution had taken place. Instead, Poles had tried to make their country their own in another way. They did all they could to control trade, finance, industrial and other spheres. They sent their sons to technical schools so that they should be competent to fill responsible posts. But, in about 1900, a new movement arose. Europe was in a state of armed peace and the Poles realised that war was bound to break out between Russia, Germany and Austria. This might give an opportunity to regain Poland's independence but in order to do this, Poland must play an active part. A very large national movement directed by secret organisations to reinforce the unity of action in the three parts of Poland, an independence movement arose with

a view to preparing secretly a Polish armed force for the future war. The weakening of Russia after the Russo-Japanese war of 1904 and the Russian Revolution of 1905 made it possible for the Polish Socialist Party and others which were fighting for the workers' rights to think seriously about the struggle for independence. Since the Revolution of 1905 was put down and stern measures were taken against the Polish Socialists, the movement moved to Galicia which enjoyed autonomy under Austria and where independence movements could therefore operate more easily than in Russian or Prussian Poland. Lwów University was the centre of much activity. Sikorski was President of the Bratnia Pomoc (Students Co-operative) an Association to which all students belonged. Sikorski also took a very active part in the Popular Schools Society, being a member of the Executive Committee. The Popular Schools Society established schools and libraries in small villages for the country children and laid the foundations of the huge educational system which existed in post-war Poland until 1939.

There were, of course, political parties among the independence movements but Sikorski, although he inclined to liberalism, belonged to no party.

In 1907 he finished his studies and became an employee of Galician Waterways Administration and made a plan for the regulation of rivers in that province, but the money obtained for the carrying out of that plan was used for the Bohemian Railways. Sikorski by no means abandoned his activities in the fight for Polish independence during the time when he was employed by the Austrian state, and in 1908 he organised a Youth Circle of military character which developed into the League for Active Struggle. He later became the first President of the Lwów Riflemen's Association as well as being a member of the Executive Committee of the League of Active Struggle which was then under the leadership of Joseph Pilsudski.

In 1910 he married Helena Zubczewska, daughter of the director of the Lwów College. In the same year he served on the Frontier Commission deciding the borders of Galicia and Russian Poland.

Wladyslaw Sikorski was a very active member of the "Temporary Commission of the Independent Parties," a semi-

secret organisation which operated all over Poland in the three partitioned provinces. He became its General Secretary in 1912. In the same year he wrote the "Regulamin" or Regulations for the infantry. This was the first military instruction to be written in Polish for fifty years. He also edited, together with his friends in Lwów, a secret paper called "The Polish Question" which was distributed all over the country.

In all his work for Polish independence, from the earliest days Wladyslaw Sikorski was the champion of democracy. He was always opposed to dictatorship.

When war broke out in 1914, the Poles were in a very difficult situation. Their country was divided between Russia, Austria and Germany. A great many of them were in the armies of those countries since they were bound to do military service. Moreover, they realised that an unique opportunity had arisen to bring the Polish question before the notice of the world—at the Peace Conference which should follow the war. On the other hand, the combatants were anxious to propitiate the Poles, the more so since part of the military operations were to take place on Polish soil. The Grand Duke Nicholas, who was Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Imperial Forces issued a manifesto, promising that Poland should be united and autonomous, once the war with Germany was won. This was done chiefly in order to impress France who was Poland's friend. The manifesto meant very little, as the Poles were soon to learn, but it had the desired effect in 1914. There was no movement against Russia in Poland and Poles fought for the Allied cause in the Imperial Army.

In Austrian Poland however, it was a different matter. Joseph Pilsudski organised the Polish Legions. The various Independence Parties joined together under the name of "Chief National Committee." Sikorski was appointed chief of the War Department of this Committee and given the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He was in charge of all the organisations of a military character which had yet to be formed into active troops. He had not only to prepare this potential army, but to recruit others to the colours and obtain from the Austrians the necessary arms and equipment. He succeeded in this difficult task and remained in this post for some time. In 1917 he went to Warsaw as Chief Inspector of Recruitment for the Polish Army and he worked

there for some months under difficult circumstances since Warsaw was occupied by the Germans. Under his direction a plan for general recruitment for the Polish army was elaborated.

Sikorski took command as Colonel of the Polish Auxiliary Corps in Przemyśl and later in Bolechów where, after the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, he addressed a solemn protest in his own name and that of 150 officers to the Commander-in-Chief of the Austrian Army against the new partition of Poland (Russia had surrendered her Polish possessions to Germany and Austria). He then wrote a letter to General Haller in which he declared his solidarity with him. General Haller had severed his connections with the Central Powers and had gone with his soldiers into Russia where other Polish armies were forming from those who had been in the Imperial Army, since Russia was no longer at war. General Haller finally reached France with his army and fought in that country with the Allies. Colonel Sikorski was interned with his men as a result of this protest, after having been before an Austrian Court, for he was still considered as an officer of the Austrian Reserve. In 1918, after some months in an internment camp in Hungary, he was once more at liberty and active. During the last weeks of Austria's existence Sikorski organised secret forces which he prepared to fight against further partitions of Poland.

At the time when the war was drawing to a close, and Poland was becoming a unified country, Colonel Sikorski was appointed as Chief of Staff to the Eastern Army of Poland. He organised Polish Forces in Galicia and later, at the head of his troops, organised the defence of Przemyśl against the Ukrainians* who were trying to capture Lwów and part of Galicia. He also took part in the defence of the communications of Lwów which the Ukrainians had tried to cut. These operations lasted during 1918 and Colonel Sikorski freed Tarnopol and the Zbrucz district, thereby being granted the freedom of the cities of Tarnopol and Brzezany.

As the German armies were withdrawing in the winter of 1918 from Polish lands, so the Russian Army, now the Red Army of Soviet Russia, advanced, occupying Wilno in 1919. They were

* The Austrians organised Ukrainian revolts and war against Poland and Russia, in order to divert the armies of both those countries from themselves.

met by newly-organised Polish forces, for volunteers had rushed to join the rapidly growing army as soon as they were free from German occupation. War started between Poland and Soviet Russia almost automatically, without any declaration. The Red Army was soon in full retreat and the Poles occupied Minsk, Bobruisk and Borisow. Sikorski, who had been promoted to Major-General, was in command of the IXth Division of Infantry. He played an outstanding part in the defeat of the Soviets in 1919, and won signal victories at Morzyrz and Kalenkowicze, both of which places he occupied.

Poland and the U.S.S.R. made some attempts to start peace negotiations in the early spring of 1920, but the Russians refused to meet the Poles at Borisow, the place which the latter had chosen for the talks. They prepared for an offensive against Poland in April, but they were forestalled. Pilsudski took the initiative and entered Kiew on May 8th. This was but a short-lived victory, however, for the Soviet, having disposed of all her internal troubles and her White Russian adversaries, could now turn her entire strength against Poland. Her armies attacked in June, making two separate offensives. That in the north was under the command of General Tuchaczewski, and proved to be superior in numbers. The excellent Russian cavalry in the south, under General Budyenny, was also more than a match for the Poles and, although they put up a brave resistance, they were forced to retreat. It was a fighting retreat, but the situation became very serious.

Russia, encouraged by the success of her armies, refused mediation but declared herself willing to negotiate directly with Poland. But Poland found that the Soviet demands amounted to a complete surrender of her independence and the acceptance of a Soviet protectorate. She proudly rejected these terms and decided to fight on.

Volunteers from the age of fourteen to that of sixty rushed to join the colours and defend their new-won freedom against a worse oppression than they had known before. A Government of National Unity was formed on 24th July and at its head were Vincenty Witos of the Peasant Party and Ignacy Daszynski, who represented the Polish Socialist Party, thus disappointing Soviet hopes of finding partisans among the peasants and workers of

Poland. Every Pole was determined that his country should not perish.

General Sikorski, who had shown great ability during the army's retreat, was given command of the Vth Army at the beginning of August. This army was eventually to take up its position at Modlin, which lies about 20 miles north-west of Warsaw on the River Vistula.

By the end of July the situation was indeed grave. General Budyenny's cavalry was harassing the Polish army in the south while in the north they were completely outnumbered. They had to fall back continually and soon reached the line of the Bug, but they were not able to hold it and they retreated towards the Vistula.

Poland was not entirely alone in her struggle, for the Allied Powers of the west had promised to support her in her struggle against Bolshevism. But no military supplies could reach her since the Workers' International Unions had declared a blockade against her, effectively stopping transport. General Weygand arrived in Warsaw at the head of a military mission, and his advice and collaboration with the chief of G.S.H.Q. General Rozwadowski, was appreciated in the councils of war; Poland had to rely mainly on herself in the battle which was to decide her freedom—and that of Europe—from Bolshevist domination.

The part to be played by the Vth Army was a momentous one. Its task was to frustrate the Russian attempt to encircle Warsaw from the north. The Vth Army was, strictly speaking, still in the process of formation, and part of it was still fighting rearguard actions when on August 13th General Sikorski received orders to take the offensive, in order to divert the enemy's attention from Warsaw and relieve the pressure on the capital. The order was not an easy one to carry out, for to rally troops into attack when they have been continually retreating is beyond the scope of any but the boldest generals. But General Sikorski was "a chief in the full sense of the word" as Marshal Foch wrote later. He attacked, and although very little ground was gained on the first day, he kept up the pressure on the enemy until the third day (August 16th) when he successfully broke through the enemy's lines. General Tuchaczewski later paid tribute to the skill and daring of the Polish Vth Army and its Commander. "The Vth

(Polish) Army seemed inevitably doomed," he wrote, "but it was saved and, regardless of our powerful IVth Army of four rifle and two cavalry divisions on its flank and in its rear, it was pressing our IIIrd and XVth Armies back. In this absolutely monstrous and inconceivable situation the Poles succeeded not only in checking the offensive of the IIIrd and XVth Soviet Armies, but also in gradually forcing them back eastwards."

General Sikorski was awarded the Order of the *Virtuti Militari**, IIInd Class, for his achievements in the Battle of the Vistula, which is known in Poland as the Miracle of the Vistula, and Lord d'Abernon called it the Eighteenth decisive Battle of the World.

In September he was given command of the IIIrd Army and together with General Stanislaw Haller, he defeated General Budyenny's cavalry and swept the Soviet Army out of Poland. He received the Order of the *Virtuti Militari*, Vth Class, for his personal bravery in the campaign.

In October of the same year General Sikorski commanded the IIInd Army in the region of Grodno. After the Armistice with Russia, he went with his staff to Jablonna, near Warsaw, where the General was appointed Chief of General Staff. During the time he filled this appointment, he conducted the demobilisation of men and material. He organised Military Schools and a new system of recruitment and training. The country was divided into military areas and Poland's peace time army efficiently organised.

In December, 1922, the newly-elected President of the Polish Republic Gabriel Narutowicz was murdered by a mad fanatic, Niewiadomski. This event led to the reconstruction of the Government and General Sikorski accepted the office of Premier and the portfolio of the Interior. During this time Marshal Pilsudski and General Sikorski worked harmoniously together and Sikorski, who was popular on account of his lack of political bias, energetically, with just but firm measures, quieted the unruly thoughts which were present in certain minds.

* The *Virtuti Militari* is divided into five Classes. The 1st is awarded only to the C.-in-C. of a victorious army; the 2nd to the G.O.C. of an Army; the 5th, which is the most prized, is awarded for personal bravery and can be won by anybody in the Polish Armed Forces. Pilsudski, as C.-in-C. of the Polish Army, was awarded the *Virtuti Militari*, 1st class, in 1920.

It was during his term of office as Premier that General Sikorski laid the foundation stone for the Port of Gdynia on May 23rd, 1923. The small fishing village was to become one of Europe's greatest harbours and it largely owed its existence to the decision taken by Sikorski.

In March, 1923, the very important Conference of Ambassadors took place in Paris. Its work was the final settling of the boundaries in Europe of those countries whose frontiers had not yet been fixed. One of these was the frontier between Poland and Russia which had been settled satisfactorily to both parties by the Treaty of Riga (1921), but was as yet unrecognised by the Great Powers. There, on March 15th, the Polish Government under the leadership of Sikorski, obtained recognition by the Allied Powers of the boundary settled at the Treaty of Riga, and this recognition was confirmed by the Government of the United States on April 5th, 1923.

Marshal Foch visited Poland during this period, in May, 1923, and expressed great admiration for the Polish army which, under Sikorski's able administration when he had been Chief of General Staff, was one of the most modern of Europe.

In summer, 1923, the Government fell and from that month until February, 1924, General Sikorski was Inspector General of the Infantry, but he kept his keen interest in politics. He was immensely popular with the army who respected him as a fine soldier.

In December, 1923, another Government came into power. Wladyslaw Grabski formed a Cabinet and gave the portfolio of Minister for War to General Sikorski. He once more applied himself to the task of modernising the army and developed the Polish Air Force, which was under the able direction of General Zagórski, on the most modern lines. He also made plans for the creation of a Navy and energetically encouraged the building of Gdynia, as well as inaugurating the merchant fleet of Poland, which in latter years reached quite considerable proportions.

He wished, as Minister for War, to appoint Pilsudski as Inspector General of the Army, which is the peace time equivalent to Commander-in-Chief. But there was one point upon which they seriously disagreed. Pilsudski wished to be completely independent and to have the Army as an entirely separate organ-

isation under his own control. He was not appointed Inspector General of the Army but Sikorski was later replaced as Minister of War. From that time there was complete disagreement between Sikorski and Pilsudski, for the former was, in principle, opposed to the semi-dictatorial policy of the Marshal and he suffered for his democratic opinions and his allegiance to the Parliamentary system.

Sikorski had proposed a ten-year plan for building up and equipping a very strong army and navy but when he fell from office this plan, as regards the army, was not realised. Had it been carried out, the Polish Army would have been equipped with all the most modern weapons. His naval plan was followed and in 1939 Poland had a small, but very efficient Navy.

Pilsudski ostensibly retired. He lived in a small villa outside Warsaw and wrote articles and books. But he was by no means as far from active participation in political affairs as would seem. He still had considerable influence in the government of his country, since he had friends and supporters who held responsible posts.

In May, 1926, there was another change of Government. Pilsudski, considering that an opportune moment had come for him to assume power, marched on Warsaw with some of the army who were his partisans. For a few days Warsaw was the scene of fighting. Sikorski, who was in Lwów as Commander of the Lwów Army Corps, an appointment which he received after he left the War Ministry, sent a small detachment to reinforce the Government. Pilsudski won the day, and Sikorski was out of favour with the Marshal. He consequently suffered a long eclipse in his promising career as a result of his loyalty to his democratic principles.

From 1928, General Sikorski was retired on half-pay and devoted his time to the study of history and the art of war. He wrote three books during this period: "On the Vistula and the Wkra" (1928) to the French translation of which Marshal Foch wrote the preface and which described the campaign of 1920; "France and Poland" (1930), and "Modern Warfare" (1933), in which he discussed modern war in all its phases and foresaw the widespread use of the tank, motorised infantry and aircraft. These works were translated into French and most of the Central

European Languages and "Modern Warfare"* obtained an award from the French Academy. General Sikorski also wrote many articles for the Polish Press, both daily and weekly, and in these he revealed himself a warm advocate of friendship between Poland and France, and between Poland and Czechoslovakia. He was always in favour of understanding with Russia rather than with Germany. Sikorski warned the country many times of the approaching German danger. He would have had the country prepare, and strengthen her friendship with France, Great Britain and Czechoslovakia. But his advice was unheeded, though in justice it must be recorded that Pilsudski, at the beginning of Hitler's rise to power, tried to induce France to wage a preventive war against Germany. The proposition was received with horrified astonishment. There was nothing to be done to persuade the French of the danger which threatened them and the whole of Europe. So Poland had to make the best she could and therefore signed the Non-Aggression Pact with Germany in 1934. The way in which Germany honoured that Pact is well known.

When Marshal Pilsudski died in 1935, the politicians who had been eclipsed by him went to visit the former Prime Minister of Poland, Paderewski, at his villa in Switzerland. Sikorski had a plan of National Unity for the country. This plan would have formed a Government embracing all parties, for Sikorski was aware that the German danger threatened. But the plan met with opposition in Poland and was not successful.

On August 30th, 1939, when the storm of war was once more about to break, General Sikorski wrote to Marshal Smigly-Rydz saying that he was entirely at the Marshal's disposal. No answer was vouchsafed to the General. On September 5th he wrote again. Still receiving no reply, he left Warsaw for Lwów and tried once more to see Marshal Smigly-Rydz in order to obtain a command. Then, on the night of September 17th, he went to the Marshal's H.Q., who did not see him but sent him a message saying that no command could be found for him. He asked the General, however, to cross the frontier into Roumania and converse with him there. General Sikorski debated within himself whether to return to Warsaw and fight in the capital but he

* Now published in English. It has been very favourably received in the British Press.

decided at last to go abroad and build a Polish army outside Poland, since the struggle inside that unhappy country could hardly last much longer as she was being invaded by the Soviet in the east.

At 4 a.m. therefore, General Sikorski crossed the Roumanian frontier and at 8 a.m. he was conferring with the French Ambassador to Poland, M. Leon Noël, and with General Faury. On September 21st, he had an important conference with M. Leon Noël and later with the Polish Ambassador, Count Roger Raczyński. They resolved that in France a Polish army should be organised and that only really useful Poles should be sent to it. They also resolved that the Polish nation was not responsible for the defeat.

The 24th, he arrived in Paris and the next day received the representative of the Polish volunteers in France (there was a large miner and working population which had been there for many years), and agreed to take command of an army which should be formed from these volunteers. On the 28th he issued the first Order of the Day. "On taking command of the Army which is now forming, I declare that from every officer and man I expect conscientious execution of duty and the greatest sacrifice . . . We are all here to defend the honour of Poland and to defend it further, for we do not desire that the Polish Army should be absent from the battles which shall decide the fate of Poland. We are not here to make politics, but to fight under the banner of Honour and Country."

After the resignation of President Moscicki, Wladyslaw Raczkiewicz became Constitutional President, and he accepted the resignation of the Government which remained in Roumania.

On September 30th General Sikorski was nominated Premier and he at once formed a new Polish Cabinet. Two days later the new Government swore fidelity to the Polish Constitution and awarded the Order of Virtuti Militari to Warsaw for her heroism in defending herself for twenty-seven days against the might of Germany.

General Sikorski conferred with Daladier and Herriot and as a result of this conference the French Chamber of Deputies declared that the integrity of the Polish frontiers should be assured by France after the war. (Like Great Britain, France declared that

she would recognise no change of frontiers which had been effected by force.)

The President of the Polish Republic, Wladyslaw Racziewicz, dissolved the Sejm and the Senate since they were no longer able to act. At the beginning of 1940 General Sikorski was to constitute the National Council which was to represent the opinion of the Polish Political Parties carrying on under the difficulties of exile and limited numbers. This had as its President Ignacy Paderewski and included members of all Polish parties. General Sikorski wished the Polish National Council as a substitute for the Parliament to function even in the abnormal circumstances in which the Government found itself. The Polish National Council was instituted formally by a decree of the President on December 9th, 1939, and had its opening on January 23rd, 1940.

On November 7th, General Sikorski was appointed Commander-in-Chief of all the Polish Forces. His wish was to create a real military power which would take part in the active struggle against the aggression which threatened the whole world. He did not wish the Polish Forces to be merely symbolic and he emphasised in an Order of the Day on November 11th that it was the duty of every Pole to fight for his country and to put all other considerations aside.

A few days later he flew to London with the Foreign Minister, A. Zaleski, and he visited the King and the British Government. From London he broadcast to Poland, and he also attended a Press Conference given by the international press as well as visited Polish Naval Units in a Scottish port.

In April, 1940, a Polish Highland Brigade went to Norway with the Allied Expeditionary Force. Before their departure, the General addressed them and emphasised that theirs was a great honour, to fight for the freedom of a companion country in misfortune. "For our Freedom and Yours" is the device on Poland's Banners and Poland's soldiers have fought for freedom wherever she has found herself in danger.

During the Battle of France, the Polish troops fought heroically. They covered the French retreat, they held up the German advance, they suffered very heavy losses. The Germans found the sector held by the Poles the only really hard one of the advance. They even said that "The Poles must be there since the resistance

is so stiff." But it soon became clear to General Sikorski that France must collapse and he had to decide quickly how best to save his army. He had made desperate efforts to induce the French High Command to make some co-ordinate plan for defence along a certain line and so stop the fatal retreat. But in vain.

On June 17th the General came straight from the front to a conference with President Raczkiewicz. A short discussion was held and a short communiqué issued :

Poland will continue to fight, even though France has capitulated.

The President will go as soon as possible to the shores of that Ally who will fight on, Great Britain.

The next day, a British bomber arrived over France. The crew had orders to find General Sikorski at all costs, and they found him in Libourne. It was then clear that without the help of the Royal Navy, the Polish Army would be lost since the Germans were fast approaching the west coast of France. The General issued a short order of the day informing the army that he intended to fly to London in order to confer with the British Government and that he would be back in two days.

At 11 p.m. he landed near London and at once asked for an interview to be arranged with the British Prime Minister and all the Service Ministries. He worked all night with his staff. Every few minutes instructions were sent out to France, ordering the Poles to assemble as best they could in the south-west of France. On June 19th, at noon, General Sikorski saw the Prime Minister. It was an historic meeting. The General spoke to Mr. Churchill frankly :

" Mr. Prime Minister, Poland fights on. I will put our armed forces at the disposition of Great Britain, our Ally. We wish to fight. I know that Britain fights on, but I wish to hear it from your own lips."

Mr. Churchill replied :

" General ! We are with you to death and to life."

The two men shook hands. It was the beginning of a firm and cordial friendship.

The machinery to evacuate the Polish Army from France was immediately set in motion and at 7 p.m. that evening, troops began to be taken off. 24,000 were saved. Orders were also sent

to the Polish Brigade in Syria to proceed at once to Palestine with all their arms and equipment, should General Mittelhauser cease to fight.

On June 24th, General Sikorski broadcast a powerful speech to Poles all over the world in which he told them that Hitler was now at the height of his power and had triumphantly occupied eight capitals of Europe. But this would not give him victory. He told his hearers that the Island of Britain was a fortress which stood prepared against German attack. He solemnly announced in the name of the President of the Polish Republic and the Polish Government that Poland would continue to fight for her independence in full understanding and with the support of His Majesty's Government. "Our place," said the General, "is where the fight continues . . . Poland's army is small in numbers, but its soul is great." A few days later he repeated, in an Order of the Day: "The fight continues, our place is beside those Allies who fight on." He paid warm tribute to the excellent work of the Royal Navy in the evacuation of the Polish Army from France.

On 5th August, 1940, a military agreement was signed between Great Britain and Poland. The Polish Army was to be re-equipped entirely with British equipment and would take an active part in the defence of Britain.

On September 1st, the anniversary of Germany's attack on Poland, the General, in an Order of the Day, emphasised that the resistance of Poland to the German invasion had not been appreciated by the world until France fell. In Poland, there were, and are no traitors. Her people continue to fight in spite of great suffering and incalculable numbers of victims.

Negotiations were started between the Polish and Czechoslovak Governments for a *rapprochement* between the two countries. A declaration of future federation was signed on November 11th, 1940. General Sikorski had brought Central European solidarity another step nearer to realisation.

Meanwhile, after a great deal of reorganisation had been accomplished, the Polish troops took up their positions on one of the coasts of Great Britain. The General assured Mr. Churchill who, with Mrs. Churchill visited the troops a few days after they had taken over their sector, that the Polish soldiers

would defend Britain as though it were their own beloved Poland.

On February 28th, 1941, General Sikorski was given the degree of Doctor of Law, *Honoris Causa*, at St. Andrews University. His address on the occasion was a significant one. He contrasted the German concept of Law with the British. For the Germans, he said, law was but the dictate of force, for them the State was divine. But they recognised no right to existence for any other state nor, according to them, had the individual any personal rights. They merely looked upon other countries as *Lebensraum* for themselves. The British, on the other hand believe, not that the state is above the law, but that the law is above the state. Every man had the right to his own opinions, to his own form of worship and all states had the right to existence. The General concluded by saying that the edifice of international law now lies in ruins and that after the war we must rebuild it again. Law was an indispensable condition of all freedom in social organisation and thus it was a condition of progress.

On March 9th, King George and Queen Elizabeth inspected the Polish troops. This was a great occasion for the army. The King had heard that Goebbels had called the Polish troops General Sikorski's "tourists," and he commented on this. "But very dangerous tourists, Your Majesty," said one of the soldiers.

Soon after this the General, accompanied by Mr. Stanislaw Mikolajczyk, the present Premier, visited America and Canada. He arrived there on April 3rd and was greeted by Mr. Mackenzie King. They conferred about the formation of a Polish Army in Canada.

On April 7th he was in Washington where he was greeted with enthusiasm by the American Press, who paid tribute to him as a great man and a great soldier. He was described in the *Washington Post* as one of the world's finest strategists, an opinion which was held by Marshal Foch. The General saw President Roosevelt, with whom he had cordial talks and with whom he had this in common: an iron will and determination to fight the foes of their countries. All the American politicians expressed the greatest admiration for Poland and their belief in her future as a great country. General Sikorski throughout his visit referred always to Fighting Poland and emphasised the active struggle which that country was carrying on.

In New York he was received with an ovation. At Easter he visited Paderewski and then went on to Chicago. There was an enormous crowd at the station which was decorated with photographs of the General and King George VI inspecting the Polish Forces. He spoke to a crowd of 75,000 people and the American Press compared this audience to that which had come to hear Lindberg the previous week. The American flier had been speaking on isolation and had not drawn one-tenth of the number. The press also stated, and with truth, that the Polish population of the U.S. was 100 per cent. pro-Ally.

General Sikorski was in contact with representatives of other Allied Nations and spoke in Detroit, where Czechs and Yugoslavs were present, of the possibility of a great federation of the western Slav nations between the Baltic and the Black Sea.

The German Press were furious about this tour. They wrote scathingly that the General had wandered from club to club with his plans for the future. But the British Press wrote warmly of the visit and of the important consequences it would have.

When Germany attacked Russia on 22nd June, 1941, and Great Britain declared that she considered the Soviet as an ally, General Sikorski realised that here was an unique opportunity to improve Polish-Russian relations and to free those two million Polish deportees who had been sent into Russia. There was also a considerable number of Polish officers and men who were prisoners of war. The General saw the possibility of rearming these and thus adding materially to Poland's armed forces which would be of great advantage to the Allies as well as to Poland. In a broadcast speech to Poland he said: "Germany's action brings us back to the conditions existing after the Treaty of Riga in 1921." Germany had more than once invited Poland to join her in action against the U.S.S.R., but Poland had always refused with firmness. Now the pact of 1939 between Germany and Russia would naturally be null and void. He drew attention to the fact that even if Germany were to wage a successful campaign against Russia, she would be left considerably weakened. He emphasised that Germany was the chief enemy.

He conferred with M. Maisky, the Soviet Ambassador in London. One point upon which he insisted was that the U.S.S.R. should permit the Polish army to re-form, and that it should have

its own command under Russian High Command. He also insisted that the civilians should receive freedom and be allowed to earn their living when possible.

On July 18th he said: "I sincerely desire understanding with Russia, in spite of the great wrong which Poland received at her hands in 1939 and in spite of 150 years of deep conflict, but the understanding must be one which fully recognises Polish Sovereignty."



General Sikorski with Their Majesties, when they inspected the Polish troops, March, 1941.

On July 30th, the Pact was signed. General Sikorski had conducted the negotiations with great skill and diplomacy. He had succeeded in overcoming great obstacles and smoothing out many difficulties. But the Pact was signed and was received in Great Britain with satisfaction. One cause of potential conflict in Europe no longer existed. It was natural that General Sikorski should wish to visit the troops in Russia. He therefore endeavoured to make arrangements to visit that country, but it was not easy at that time since the Germans were advancing against Moscow. In the autumn he decided to go to Tobruk and, if possible, to continue to Russia from Egypt.

On November 1st, accordingly, he flew from Plymouth to Gibraltar, where he was received by Lord Gort. He flew on to Malta where he made a surprise inspection of the Polish submarine "Sokol" which had just returned from a patrol on which she had sunk two Italian ships.

He arrived at Cairo on November 6th and a few days later went from Alexandria in the destroyer *Kipling* to Tobruk. Conditions there were hard, but the General lived like a soldier with his men. The General inspected all the units, including the Australians and Czechs which were all under the command of General Kopanski, and he decorated many officers and men.

On November 20th, General Sikorski left Cairo by air and went to Teheran via Bagdad. There, he was met by Polish, British and Russian envoys with whom was General Anders, G.O.C. the Polish forces in Russia. He greeted General Sikorski with great emotion. He had been a prisoner of war for nearly two years.

In Kuibishev, there was again a very warm welcome from the Poles. They saw Sikorski, the man who had refused to give up the fight, the man who would lead Poland back to greatness.

On December 3rd he went to Moscow. There he saw Stalin, with whom he had a conversation lasting two and a half hours. The upshot of this talk was the Polish-Russian declaration and Stalin agreed to a Polish army several divisions strong. Stalin also promised that the civilian Poles should be sent from Siberia to the south of Russia.

The next day there was a splendid banquet for the General and his Staff. Many toasts were drunk to the future relations between the two countries, and Stalin proposed a toast to a greater and stronger Poland.

On the same day, General Sikorski broadcast to Poland, and the Polish-Russian declaration was published. It stated that: German Hitlerite Imperialism is the worst enemy of mankind. No compromise is possible with it. Both Poland and Russia will fight, together with Great Britain, until final victory. Both countries would work in accord for a just and lasting peace.

This was broadcast from Moscow in 40 languages, "also in German so that Hitler would have the pleasure of listening to it."

General Sikorski was pleased with his talks to Stalin and he paid tribute to his powerful personality and ability.

The General went back to Kuibishev where he fell victim to an attack of influenza, but he continued to work. Later he went to Buzuluk to inspect the Polish Army. The enthusiasm with which he was received was tremendous. He visited all the units and spoke to many of the men who had fought bravely for their country in 1939, suffered the rigours of a prison camp and, as soon as they were free, had gone quickly to join the army once more and fight again.

The party returned to Britain the same route by which they had come. Christmas was spent in Cairo and the General arrived back in Great Britain at the beginning of January. The journey had covered 15,000 miles in extremes of heat and cold. The General had flown 120 hours, had spoken many times in public and seen innumerable people, besides having to read reports sent daily from Great Britain.

In February, 1942, the Second National Council was instituted, which had been increased to include delegates representing the Poles in Russia, who had hitherto been unable to leave that country. At the opening, the General made a memorable speech at which he outlined Poland's plans for the future. He promised agricultural reform, democracy with a free and secret vote, work for all and close co-operation with Poland's neighbours in strategic matters as well as industrial and agricultural. Professor Stanislaw Grabski who took part in the negotiations of the Treaty of Riga (1921) was elected President of the National Council. This National Council Meeting was attended also by representatives of the Czech Government with whom Poland signed a Federation Treaty on November 11th, 1941.

General Sikorski went to America for the second time on March 16th of this year. He flew over in a bomber and was accompanied on the tour by Count Edward Raczyński, Polish Ambassador to Great Britain.

The General visited the White House where he saw President Roosevelt. At the President's request he gave his opinion on the situation on the European fronts.

The General expressed great admiration for the splendid defence of Bataan and Corregidor which was being carried out by

General MacArthur, on whom he conferred, with President Roosevelt's permission, the Order of *Virtuti Militari*. The American Press was delighted and was gratified by General Sikorski's second visit to the U.S.A., emphasising as it did, that the U.S. was a very interested party in the future of Europe.

General Sikorski visited the Grave of the Unknown Soldier, and also that of his great compatriot, Paderewski, who had died since his last visit, still working at the age of 80 for Poland.

He saw Dr. Soong, the Chinese Minister for Foreign Affairs, and members of the Chinese Military Mission. It was later announced that a Polish Diplomatic Representative would be sent to Chung-King, and that China should send a representative to the Polish Government.

General Sikorski and Mr. Sumner Welles had a long and very frank conference, at which it was clear that the American Secretary of State perfectly understood the Polish point of view. The U.S. and Poland were of one mind upon all points.

On the invitation of Mr. Sol Bloom, the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the House of Representatives, General Sikorski attended the meeting of that Committee. He was greeted with unusual warmth and he made a speech which covered the war and international situations. The members expressed their deepest satisfaction at the clear and exhaustive way in which the General had exposed the situation. Mr. Sol Bloom, thanking the General, said that he asked him to express to the Poles the most sincere sympathy of the American Parliamentarians and the assurance that America would not rest until Poland's wrongs had been righted.

On March 30th he went to New York where he broadcast to the Polish people. He told them that he had found in the U.S. complete understanding of Polish problems and Polish war-aims. At the request of Colonel Donovan (in charge of the co-ordination of propaganda in the U.S.) he also spoke to all the occupied countries. He assured them that America was not fighting merely for her own freedom, but for the freedom of all countries, great or small. "The American nation," said the General, "will never admit a compromise on the matter of freedom and equality among all nations." This speech was broadcast in sixteen languages on all the American short-waves.

On March 31st he went to Ottawa where he saw Mr. Mackenzie King. The Earl of Athlone and Princess Alice also received him.

On Easter Sunday morning the General attended Mass on an airfield in Newfoundland, where he was forced to interrupt his homeward journey on account of weather conditions. The airfield is staffed by Polish airmen and the General spent some time with them.

Before leaving the United States he broadcast to Poland and told his compatriots that he was entirely satisfied with the conversations he had held. The whole American press was enthusiastic about the visit and discussed at length the General's ideas about the future battles which, he foresaw, were to be fought on all fronts.

It is interesting to recall that when addressing the Polish troops in Scotland immediately after his return, the General said: "Lately, during my many, sometimes dangerous and always difficult flights, I understood our airmen, I understood their mysticism, their selfless devotion to the cause, their ceaseless battles, which have covered the name of Poland with glory."

Visiting a Bomber Station on the anniversary of the first operations made by two of the Squadrons over enemy territory, the General watched the machines, laden with heavy bombs, line up for the take-off. He said, during supper in the mess, that this was "the most beautiful parade" he had ever seen. The Polish Air Force's opportunity to hit back at Germany and thus revenge the ruthless bombing of Poland was a source of great satisfaction to General Sikorski.

He spoke on 3rd May at His Majesty's Theatre at a celebration held in honour of Poland's National Day. Broadcasting to America the same evening, he said that the Constitution of 3rd May, 1791, was a symbol of liberty for all Poles and that wherever liberty found herself in danger, Poles were to be found fighting for her, keeping up the traditions of the Patriots of the XVIIIth Century.

The Polish Government, in June, drew the attention of Allied Governments to the German methods of terror in Poland and to the forcible conscription of Poles into the German army, at the same time strongly protesting against this breach of International Law. General Sikorski made a forcible speech in the National

Council in which he affirmed that those responsible for these crimes should be punished. "The Polish Government has a record of the crimes," he added, "and not one shall be erased from the reckoning."

In June, 1942, was signed the British-Soviet 20-years agreement about which the General expressed sincere pleasure, especially that it was made within the spirit of the Atlantic Charter and that both Great Britain and the U.S.S.R. had clearly stated that they would not interfere with the interior affairs of other states. In a broadcast made to the Poles in Russia on the anniversary of the Polish-Soviet Pact, 30th July, he said that this Pact was to begin a new era between Poland and Russia. Telegrams were exchanged between the General and Stalin on this occasion.

In a broadcast to Czechoslovakia he praised the work of Czech patriots in killing the infamous butcher, Heydrich, and said that Poland and Czechoslovakia shared the horrible fate of German occupation but that side by side they would fight for their liberation and that they co-operate closely when it finally came.

The General paid a visit to American troops in Northern Ireland in July, 1942. He spent two days with them. Soon after this the American press printed, in 1,200 of its newspapers, a long article about General Sikorski. This described him as a typical Polish soldier, brave and fearless, praised his flights to the U.S. and Russia and recalled how at Tobruk he had insisted on going up to the most forward positions to decorate the men, although the British Command had urged him to stay in a safer place.

There was a meeting of Protest against the persecution of the Jews which took place on 29th October at the Albert Hall. General Sikorski spoke at this meeting of the cruelties perpetrated by the Germans to Jews of all nationalities who were in concentration camps in occupied Poland. These unfortunate people were the victims of German scientific experiments in mass-murder and the General expressed his indignation and horror at these German brutalities as well as his sympathy for the tortured Jewish people.

When opening a Polish school of Architecture at Liverpool University, General Sikorski was the recipient of the degree of Doctor of Law, *Honoris Causa*. The Catholic University of

Washington also conferred this honour upon the Polish Prime Minister.

At the end of November, the General arrived for the third time by air in America, at the invitation of President Roosevelt. The *Daily Telegraph* stated that he was visiting Washington with the knowledge and support of the Allied Governments in London, "it may be said that he is their representative." The General saw President Roosevelt, Mr. Sumner Welles, Mr. Cordell Hull and Lord Halifax. There were many conferences of a political and military nature with American and Allied statesmen and high officers. The General went to New York where he spoke to the Overseas Press Club, and to Chicago where he received a symbolic golden key of the city.

During a visit to Detroit he spoke about Poland's eastern frontiers. He reminded his audience that he had fought for Poland's integrity in the defence of Lwów. He had gained the international recognition of Poland's eastern frontiers in 1923. "I do not barter Polish soil," he said, "I have defended it and shall defend it . . . as a realist I am of the opinion that Poland should come to an understanding with her eastern neighbour, but between ourselves and the Germans there is an abyss which cannot be bridged."

Then the General went to Mexico where he was warmly received and where he reviewed the troops after conferring at length with various members of the Government. Mexico generously offered to take a large number of Poles evacuated from Russia. General Sikorski returned to Washington where he had a third conference with President Roosevelt. He returned by air to Great Britain on 13th January, 1943.

Early in the year, relations between Poland and the Soviet Union were becoming more strained. The continued detention of a large number of Polish citizens, the unknown fate of about 10,000 Polish officers who had been prisoners of war and about whom all enquiries were unavailing and the suppression by the Soviet Government of all relief for the Poles in Russia caused some doubts in the minds of the Poles. General Sikorski made continual efforts to clear up the situation (he had received assurances from Stalin on all these points when he was in Moscow) but the Soviet Government was very uncommunicative on the

subject of Poles in Russia, except to assert that they were Soviet citizens. An article by a Ukrainian, Mr. Kornejczuk, asserting that Poland laid claim to parts of the Soviet Union after the war led the Polish Government to deny this categorically, stating that they wished for a return to the frontiers of 1939, but no more and no less. Then the exploitation by German propaganda of the murdered Polish officers from the camps of Kozielsk, Starobielsk and Ostaszko added fuel to the flame. In view of the fact that the families of these men had been imploring news of them since April, 1940, the Polish Government wished to assure itself whether the thousands of bodies of which the Germans spoke were those of their compatriots or not. In the circumstances the International Red Cross was the only body who could investigate but, owing to the fact that Russia was not a member of the Red Cross, they did not accede to this request. But the Soviet Government became very angry and although they had previously denied all knowledge of the whereabouts of the missing officers saying that they had been released, they now asserted that they had been captured by the Germans near Smolensk and killed by them. They broke off diplomatic relations with Poland and accused her Government of "collaborating with Hitler."

This was a hard blow for General Sikorski who saw his work of bringing the two countries together brought to nothing. But he did not waver and under his direction the Polish Government issued a dignified and moderate statement, affirming only their intention of maintaining Poland's integrity and their policy of aiming at a friendly understanding with Soviet Russia on the basis of that integrity, and appealing for the release of their citizens in order that they might fight the common enemy.

Speaking to Poland on the occasion of the National Day, 3rd May, General Sikorski said, that he knew his countrymen were fighting against the Germans with all their strength and with all the hatred that was in their hearts. "Even the perfidious 'revelations' about the tragedy of our colleagues who died without tidings reaching us, has not changed the inflexible attitude of the Nation. German offers of better conditions have also no effect."

After speaking of the terrible sufferings of Poland and stating that her losses were as many as 15 per cent. of the Nation, the

General said that the Polish Government wished for solidarity among the United Nations, and that resumption of good relations with Russia was one of their chief aims. "We await from the Soviet Government that they should set free the thousands of soldiers' families and the thousands of Polish children and orphans, that they should free men for military service and that they should permit us to care for those who remain in Russia. These are certainly not claims which should break the unity of the Allies."

At the end of May, General Sikorski started on a journey to the Middle East, that which was to be his last. He went to Cairo and then to Bagdad where he inspected the Polish troops under the command of General Anders. It was during this journey that he received a personal letter from President Roosevelt, the contents of which he would not divulge, except to say that in this letter the President once more assured him of his sympathy for Poland and the Polish nation. The General spent many hours with his men and with the "Junaks," young Polish boys who are undergoing military training in Palestine. He was accompanied by his only child, Madame Zofja Lesniowska, who was head of the Polish Women's Auxiliary Service. It was on leaving Gibraltar that the aircraft in which they were travelling crashed. General Sikorski, his daughter, the Chief of Staff, General Klimecki, several members of his staff and Colonel Cazalet, M.P., the liaison officer between General Sikorski and Mr. Churchill, were all killed.

The news of General Sikorski's death came as a grievous blow to all the allies and most of all to his countrymen, who felt that they had indeed lost a leader and a friend.

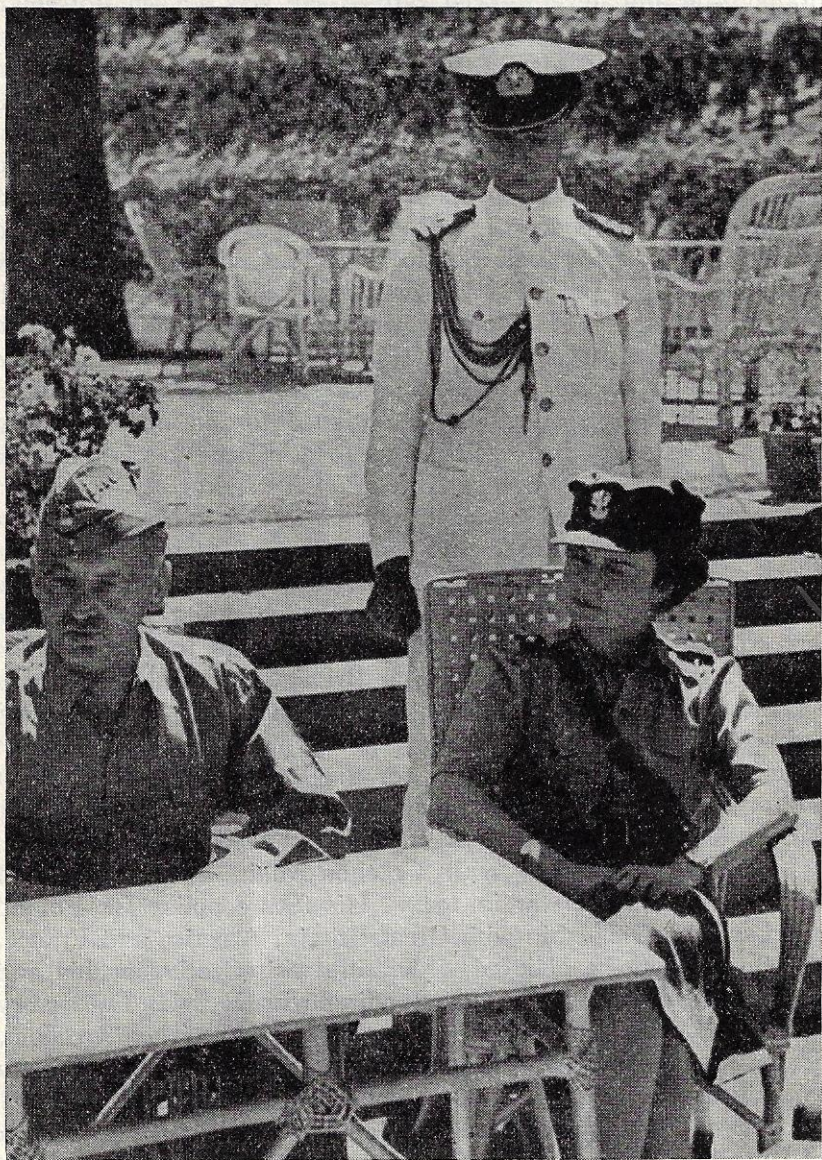
General Sikorski's abilities were very great. Not only was he a brilliant soldier, endowed with great personal courage, he was also a statesman and a European statesman. He had an immense capacity for work and an unusually quick grasp of the matter in hand. For this reason he disliked long reports, especially if they were verbal. A handsome man, with a commanding presence and an agreeable speaking voice, he attracted people by his charm of manner and his sense of humour. In repose his face was sad, but when speaking he was animated and, when in a good mood, he enjoyed teasing his staff. A non-smoker, he

drank little and never played cards. He was a keen horseman and tennis player and in Poland took a keen interest in farming. His daughter was also a fine horsewoman and took part in International Horse Shows. His widow, Madame Helena Sikorska, is in this country. She is vice-chairman of the Polish Red Cross.

General Sikorski was a typical Pole. He knew what it was to fight for independence, he knew what sacrifice to ideals meant. He was a firm believer in democracy and was not prejudiced against any one for their political opinions, if he thought they wished to serve Poland. He was realist as his relations with Russia showed. He sincerely wished for understanding with Russia like the vast majority of Poles, but like them, not at the expense of 51 per cent. of Poland's territory and more than 30 per cent. of her population. He wished for an understanding such as existed with Russia since 1923, when no claims were made by Russia with regard to Polish territory, when both countries respected each other's internal affairs and when a non-aggression pact was made and renewed.

General Sikorski was typically Polish in his refusal to be beaten. When France fell and nearly everybody expected the war to end very soon, he made arrangements to evacuate the Polish army to fight on—in Great Britain, menaced as she was by imminent invasion. When people spoke of Russia being defeated in three weeks, the General was extending the hand of friendship to her and planning for the Poles in Russia to fight with the U.S.S.R. until victory over Germany. Even in the darkest days, he never despaired and always looked to the future, as when he concluded with Czechoslovakia a declaration of Federation after the war in 1940. His future policy for Poland was based on friendship with Great Britain, America and France, in whose future he believed, federation with Czechoslovakia and possibly other countries, understanding with Russia, and a very firm hand with Germany. For Poland he wished freedom, democracy, the right for all to work, to educate their children, to worship as they pleased in the true Polish tradition.

General Sikorski has given his life for his country. His work will not have been in vain, for Poland shall rise again, free and strong, to take her rightful place among the nations of Europe.



The last photograph of General Sikorski with his daughter and A.D.C., Lt. Ponikewski, who also perished in the crash.

MR. CHURCHILL'S TRIBUTE TO GENERAL SIKORSKI

Speaking in the House on 6th July, Mr. Churchill said:

We learned yesterday that the cause of the United Nations had suffered a grievous loss. It is my duty to express the feelings of this House, and to pay tribute to the memory of a great Polish patriot and staunch ally, General Sikorski. His death in the air crash at Gibraltar was one of the heaviest strokes we have sustained.

From the first dark days of the Polish catastrophe and the brutal triumph of the German war machine until the moment of his death on Sunday night he was the symbol and the embodiment of that spirit which has borne the Polish nation through centuries of sorrow and is unquenchable by agony. When the organised resistance of the Polish Army in Poland was beaten down, General Sikorski's first thought was to organise all Polish elements in France to carry on the struggle, and a Polish army of over 80,000 men presently took its station on the French fronts. The army fought with the utmost resolution in the disastrous battles of 1940. Part fought its way out in good order into Switzerland, and is to-day interned there. Part marched resolutely to the sea and reached this island.

Here General Sikorski had to begin his work again. He persevered, unwearied and undaunted. The powerful Polish forces which have now been accumulated and equipped in this country and in the Middle East, to the latter of whom his last visit was paid, now await with confidence and ardour the tasks which lie ahead. General Sikorski commanded the devoted loyalty of the Polish people now tortured and struggling in Poland itself. He personally directed the movement of resistance which has maintained a ceaseless warfare against German oppression in spite of sufferings as terrible as any nation has ever endured. This resistance will grow in power until, at the approach of liberating armies, it will exterminate the German ravagers of the homeland.

I was often brought into contact with General Sikorski in those years of war. I had a high regard for him, and admired his poise and calm dignity amid so many trials and baffling problems.

He was a man of remarkable pre-eminence, both as a statesman and a soldier. His agreement with Marshal Stalin of July 30th, 1941, was an outstanding example of his political wisdom. Until the moment of his death he lived in the conviction that all else must be subordinated to the needs of the common struggle and in the faith that a better Europe will arise in which a great and independant Poland will play an honourable part. We British here and throughout the Commonwealth and Empire, who declared war on Germany because of Hitler's invasion of Poland and in fulfilment of our guarantee, feel deeply for our Polish allies in their new loss.

We express our sympathy to them, we express our confidence in their immortal qualities, and we proclaim our resolve that General Sikorski's work as Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief shall not have been done in vain. The House would, I am sure, wish also that its sympathy should be conveyed to Madame Sikorska, who dwells here in England, and whose husband and daughter have both been simultaneously killed on duty.

PRICE 1/3—NETT.