

"The Underground City"

10:00:25 - 10:00:57

Commentary:

Warsaw, Poland. It was here the uprising broke out on August 1st in 1944. The Second World War was in its fifth year. The soldiers of the underground Home Army, made the decision to rise up for a final battle against the Germans. They chose the moment when the Soviet Army had advanced to Warsaw's borders. The Home Army were determined to not only defeat the Germans but also save Poland from Stalin.

One of the iconic elements of the Warsaw Uprising was its sewer system. While battles were being fought on the streets of Warsaw, weapons and information were being transported through the underground sewers. And also served as an escape route for Polish soldiers and civilians in the last days of the uprising.

10:01:01 - 10:01:17

JERZY STEFAN STAWIŃSKI

((Lieutenant of the Home Army and screenwriter of the film "Kanał"))

Wajda, the director of the film, told me that at Cannes Film Festival they praised his scriptwriter who had made up such a magnificent story. Wajda then said to me: "Listen, tell these gentlemen that you didn't make this up, you lived through it".

10:01:20 - 10:01:26

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((Lieutenant of the Home Army and screenwriter of the film "Kanał"))

In the film, as in my novel, what happens is one hundred percent fact.

10:01:30 - 10:01:31

A fragment of the film:

- Let's go boys!

10:01:32 - 10:01:52

JERZY STEFAN STAWIŃSKI

((Lieutenant of the Home Army and the screenwriter of the film "Kanał",))

I formed our company by recruiting three classmates in 1940. We together with others formed a group of 120 and joined the uprising. I thought that the uprising would last four hours, or not more than 48 at the most. We would either win back Warsaw or die. I never thought it would last 63 days.

"PODZIEMNE MIASTO"

10:00:25 - 10:00:57

Komentarz

Warszawa. To właśnie tutaj 1 sierpnia 1944 roku wybuchło Powstanie Warszawskie. Był to już 5 rok II wojny światowej. Żołnierze podziemnej Armii Krajowej podjęli decyzję o ostatecznej walce. Wybrali moment, gdy Wojska Sowieckie podeszły do granic Warszawy. Postanowili pokonać Niemców, ale też ratować Polskę przed Stalinem.

Jednym z symboli Powstania Warszawskiego są kanały. Gdy na ulicach Warszawy trwały regularne walki, kanałami dostarczano broń, meldunki, i wreszcie tędy ewakuowali się żołnierze i ludność cywilna.

10:01:01 - 10:01:17

JERZY STEFAN STAWIŃSKI

(autor scenariusza filmu "Kanał", porucznik AK)

Wajda mówił, że przyszli do niego w Cannes, że ma pan dobrego scenarzystę, bo świetnie wszystko wymyślił. Ten mnie poprosił: "Słuchaj powiedz tym panom, że tyś nic nie wymyślił, tylko miałeś właśnie na karku to wszystko".

10:01:20 - 10:01:26

JERZY STEFAN STAWIŃSKI

(autor scenariusza filmu "Kanał", porucznik AK)

W filmie tak jak w moim opowiadaniu realia są w 100% prawdziwe.

10:01:30 - 10:01:31

Fragment filmu:

- Idziemy chłopcy!

10:01:32 - 10:01:52

JERZY STEFAN STAWIŃSKI

(autor scenariusza filmu "Kanał", porucznik AK)

Ja tą kompanię sformowałem począwszy od 3 kolegów w '40 roku. Z tych ludzi do powstania ja wyszedłem ze 120-stoma. Uważałem, że powstanie nie będzie trwać

In the film, as in my novel, what happens is one hundred percent fact.

10:01:30 - 10:01:31

A fragment of the film:

- Let's go boys!

10:01:32 - 10:01:52

JERZY STEFAN STAWIŃSKI

(Lieutenant of the Home Army and the screenwriter of the film "Kanał",)

I formed our company by recruiting three classmates in 1940. We together with others formed a group of 120 and joined the uprising. I thought that the uprising would last four hours, or not more than 48 at the most. We would either win back Warsaw or die. I never thought it would last 63 days.

10:01:55 - 10:02:07

Commentary:

August 1st is the anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising and a special day for Poles. Each year at 5 o'clock the city stops for two minutes' silence to mark the hour at which the Uprising broke out. The day is also commemorated by visiting the graves of the Home Army soldiers.

10:02:08 - 10:02:17

EWA JEGLIŃSKA

(Liaison officer of the Home Army)

I left a note on my mum's desk: "Don't worry, I'll be back soon". Well, we didn't see each other until a year later.

10:02:28 - 10:03:00

ANNA JAKUBOWSKA

(Home Army nurse)

Everyone was convinced that the uprising would sooner or later break out. We longed for an end to the dreadful captivity that had been going on for several years. Every single day we were exposed to someone getting killed, arrested or abused. We wanted the uprising, we wanted freedom, and we wanted Warsaw to become Polish again.

10:03:01 - 10:03:13

The song “Children of Warsaw”

Our neighbourhoods: Powiśle, Wola and Mokotów,
Every street and every house,
Be prepared for the sound of the first gunshot
and God’s thunderbolt in hand

10:03:14 - 10:03:24

EWA JEGLIŃSKA

(Liaison officer of the Home Army)

People opened up to each other. They helped and supported one another. There was this whole feeling of unity.

10:03:25 - 10:03:36

EWA KRASNOWOLSKA

(A Home Army nurse)

There were Polish flags, Polish songs. There were no Germans and we were free. We could finally take on the enemy who had done so much harm to our entire nation.

10:03:59 - 10:04:34

Commentary:

Due to restriction imposed by the Communist regime in Poland, the Warsaw Rising Museum wasn’t opened until sixty years after the uprising. Photographs that had been kept hidden now fill the museum walls; they are mostly of young students, lawyers and doctors – soldiers of the Home Army.

By 1944 the Polish intelligentsia along with other strata of society had formed the largest underground army in Europe. Although they were poorly armed they took on the much stronger German forces. Their tragic battle was observed by the Soviet army who had stopped short just outside of Warsaw. The Home Army hoped for help that never came. They fought for 63 days.

[The Warsaw Rising Museum]

10:04:35 - 10:05:09

Song:

Above my head the hatch closes
A ladder leads underground
It is here I’m reborn as a rebel

For this cause I would give my blood

10:05:09 - 10:05:16

EWA JEGLIŃSKA

(Liaison officer of the Home Army)

You would literally climb down into stinking sludge, which would reach, up to your knees.

10:05:22 - 10:05:34

EWA JEGLIŃSKA

(Liaison officer of the Home Army)

And the sewers were the only way we could pass on the information; there was no other alternative, because you couldn't do it up on the streets.

10:05:35 - 10:06:01

Commentary:

From day one, the Home Army used the sewer system to uphold the communication between different city districts that had been cut off by the Germans. An underground telephone line was installed. Young boy scouts assisted as guides through the tunnels. The use of the sewers as a communication system was something unprecedented in war history.

10:06:02 - 10:06:14

DANUTA KOZIEJ-WRZOSIŃSKA

(Liaison officer of the Home Army)

We would carry orders, mail, and even hand grenades that were made out of tin cans. You couldn't crawl because cutting your knees could cause a serious infection.

10:06:22 - 10:06:53

EWA JEGLIŃSKA

(Liaison officer of the Home Army)

Each one of us had a flashlight, but often we dropped them and they got wet. There were awful smells coming from the sewers and at the junctions there were signs that said things like: "Wilcza Street. Don't be afraid! – You'll get there." So even if you were at breaking point, this kept you going and that was really something.

10:06:55 - 10:07:16

DANUTA KOZIEJ-WRZOSIŃSKA

(Liaison officer of the Home Army)

At first it took us several hours to get to the Old Town and that was a long time. Later we used to take short cuts and pretend we were record-breaking athletes. I managed to get to the Old Town and back twice in one day. "I was there twice today", we would brag to each other.

10:07:22 - 10:08:01

EWA JEGLIŃSKA

(Liaison officer of the Home Army)

When I climbed out I asked the boys: "Is the commander still here because we have orders to give him?" They laughed and said: "Girl, you can't show yourself like this, you're covered in, pardon my language, crap". So they took a hose and rinsed me off with water. So soaking wet, I went to the headquarters to deliver the order I had sewn into my shoulder pad.

10:08:13 - 10:08:32

JANINA GELLERTOWA

(Liaison officer of the Home Army)

The sun was shining and it was so peaceful, so I thought to myself that maybe I could just stroll home through the underground passages between the basements I knew that lead to Unia Lubelska Square – just to see how everybody was doing at home.

10:08:42 - 10:08:45

JANINA GELLERTOWA

(Liaison officer of the Home Army)

And then suddenly a round of shots was fired.

10:09:03 - 10:09:12

Song:

Long live the Army, the Air force, the Navy!
Long live the soldiers of the Polish underground!
Long live a free and independent Poland!

10:10:34 - 10:10:57

ANNA JAKUBOWSKA

(Home Army nurse)

I lay in my bed counting as the planes bombed the Old Town. You would count the amount of seconds before the bomb exploded and wonder if it hit your house or the one next to yours. And then I thought about the mothers with their children, and the helpless elders in their basements – what about them?

10:11:03 - 10:11:11

ELŻBIETA GODLEWSKA

Elżbieta was born at the end of February. She was barely six months old.

10:11:11 - 10:11:24

EWA KRASNOWOLSKA

(Home Army nurse)

The poor thing was rarely crying. The pram and the blanket were often covered in soot and plaster from the walls.

10:11:26 - 10:11:38

ELŻBIETA GODLEWSKA

We all turned black. My child started to suffocate. I had to spit on her and lick the soot of her face.

10:11:41 - 10:11:51

EWA KRASNOWOLSKA

(Home Army nurse)

Those people suffered a lot. At that point their suffering was much worse than ours, because we had our struggle, our rebellion to keep us going.

10:11:52 - 10:12:05

Song "Children of Warsaw"

We children of Warsaw, go to fight
For each brick we'd give our blood!
The children of Warsaw, we will fight,
Just say the word and we will strike the enemy with wrath!

10:12:25 - 10:12:39

“August 1st – The anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising”

10:12:36 - 10:12:44

ALICJA GLIŃSKA

(Home Army nurse)

I remember the house being on fire, it was dark, silent, but from time to time a beam from the ceiling would crush down, and then there would be silence again...

10:12:48 - 10:13:26

ALICJA GLIŃSKA

(Home Army nurse)

The patrol commander checked our positions and I walked behind him. And it was he who said that we should expect an attack from the Germans as soon as it got light. He said to keep quiet for now because the enemy mustn't hear us. Then suddenly something exploded – his calf was torn off and my ankle injured. And that was the end of our fight.

10:13:54 - 10:14:26

EWA JEGLIŃSKA

(Liaison officer of the Home Army)

I found myself in a tunnel that the Germans had bricked across. And there was no way out. We sat down in the sludge, with sewage up to our necks. We remained like that hoping for a miracle to happen, for God not to abandon us so that we could get out of this.

10:14:30 - 10:14:53

EWA JEGLIŃSKA

(Liaison officer of the Home Army)

There was a young boy scout who sat next to me, he was twelve and he said to me: “Miss Ewa, we're going to be stuck here forever” And I replied: “Supetek, that was his nickname, something is going to happen and we'll get out”.

10:14:56 - 10:15:01

EWA JEGLIŃSKA

(Liaison officer of the Home Army)

We stayed there for 36 hours before they pulled down the wall.

10:15:08 - 10:15:43

EWA KRASNOWOLSKA

(Home Army nurse)

We brought him the boy and begged the doctor to take care of him. He examined him and said: "There is no hope for him, take him away", "What do you mean 'take him away'?" "There is no way to save him, I have lot of wounded men here – I'm not able to save him". We couldn't comprehend this at all. We just couldn't believe that he couldn't be saved. Later I learned that someone with wounds like these couldn't be saved, but still you got to try till the very end.

10:16:00 - 10:16:41

EWA KRASNOWOLSKA

(Home Army nurse)

Doctor Morwa asked for permission to use the nunnery as a hospital for the uprising. After a moment of silence Sister Tomea said: "For three hundred years of this convent no man or stranger has set his foot inside this nunnery. But today we live in strange and unusual times; today even our children must fight the devil. You may use the convent – and we will do whatever we can to help".

10:17:41:00 - 10:17:58:00

Commentary

When the centre of Warsaw was surrounded by the Germans, a decision was made to evacuate and six thousand people was sent through the sewers, the only way out. By the end of the uprising nine thousand had gone the same route. Several hundred of them died along the way.

10:18:00 - 10:18:08

JANINA GELLERTOWA

(Liaison officer of the Home Army)

We received a message that the leaders and the high command were retreating through the sewers. And then the Old Town fell.

10:18:15 - 10:18:41

JANINA GELLERTOWA

(Liaison officer of the Home Army)

You could see the emotions on their faces. I clearly remember general Bor, the commander-in-chief of the uprising, walking out in his crumpled hat, looking very sad,

pale and with a great sorrow in his eyes.

10:18:54 - 10:19:18

DANUTA KOZIEJ - WRZOSIŃSKA

(Liaison officer of the Home Army)

Nobody was allowed into the sewers who had hurt their legs or who had an arm in a sling that made them too wide to pass through the manhole. I had to measure them with a stick!

10:19:19 - 10:19:46

ANNA JAKUBOWSKA

(Home Army nurse)

The day before the evacuation through the sewers my sister got seriously injured. Both her legs were crushed. This became my personal tragedy and I told the doctor who had assigned us to groups, that I couldn't come, that I was going to stay with my sister. My cousin was hurt as well and couldn't walk through the sewers either.

10:19:47 - 10:19:55

EWA KRASNOWOLSKA

(Home Army nurse)

We knew what the Germans did to the wounded in the Wola district; everyone knew that they were slaughtered.

10:19:58 - 10:20:11

EWA KRASNOWOLSKA

(Home Army nurse)

I think it was worse for the doctor who had to decide who to take and who would be left behind because they wouldn't make it.

10:20:13 - 10:20:29

ANNA JAKUBOWSKA

(Home Army nurse)

I was told that these were my private, family matters and that I was a soldier who had to follow orders. But still to this day I think that I should have stayed with my sister.

10:20:36 - 10:20:46

ANNA JAKUBOWSKA

(Home Army nurse)

It was like going down to hell. This dark underground – confined, airless, smelly.

10:20:54 - 10:21:20

JERZY STEFAN STAWIŃSKI

(Lieutenant of the Home Army and the screenwriter of the film “Kanał”)

The situation became more and more desperate. They took the Old Town, Powiśle, and surrounded the city centre, the district of Wola was annihilated instantly, they murdered everyone. And lastly they took on the Mokotów area. Those who could – escaped through the tunnels.

10:21:24 - 10:21:41

JANINA GELLERTOWA

(Liaison officer of the Home Army)

In my mum’s diary it says: “After the Mokotów district was defeated, we went with the soldiers through the sewers to the city centre. Unfortunately not all of us made it. The Germans started to poison us and panic broke out”.

10:21:46 - 10:22:03

ANNA JAKUBOWSKA

(Home Army nurse)

It was as if all humanity was suddenly gone, instinct took over, and everyone was fighting to save their own skin. People would step on each other, not knowing if they had stamped on someone’s face or not.

10:22:04 - 10:22:15

JERZY STEFAN STAWIŃSKI

(Lieutenant of the Home Army and the screenwriter of the film “Kanał”)

The crowd in front started to push and wanted us to return to Mokotów, the Germans were shooting, throwing grenades, gas bombs – it was impossible, impossible to pass through.

10:22:18 - 10:22:25

JERZY STEFAN STAWIŃSKI

(Lieutenant of the Home Army and the screenwriter of the film “Kanał”)

My men along with others in the back started to look for an exit to the surface, but this

was something I didn't see.

10:22:35 - 10:22:39

JERZY STEFAN STAWIŃSKI

(Lieutenant of the Home Army and the screenwriter of the film "Kanał")

Up there was a German police station. The Germans lined up everyone coming out of the sewers. One of the boys from my company decided to try and escape and made a run for it. The Germans started shooting and once they started they went on and on. They killed more than one hundred people before an officer came out and ordered them to stop.

10:23:14 - 10:23:21

JERZY STEFAN STAWIŃSKI

(Lieutenant of the Home Army and the screenwriter of the film "Kanał")

It was a tragedy for me as a commander who had lead seventy people and had come out with only three...

10:23:31 - 10:23:46

JANINA GELLERTOWA

(Home Army nurse)

My mother was pulled out of the sewers on Wilcza Street and taken to a hospital because she was unconscious, gassed and blinded.

10:24:07 - 10:24:12

JERZY STEFAN STAWIŃSKI

(Lieutenant of the Home Army and the screenwriter of the film "Kanał")

It was awful, what happened in that sewer is the most traumatic thing to happen in my life.

10:24:15 - 10:24:25

JERZY STEFAN STAWIŃSKI

(The screenwriter of the film "Kanał", Lieutenant of the Home Army)

I decided to go back into the sewers and look for my men. It was all silent down there, there were dead bodies lying in the sewage.

10:24:37 - 10:24:56

EWA JEGLIŃSKA

(Liaison of the Home Army)

We were devastated. I was with my boyfriend, a boy from my unit, he was also wounded and tears were flooding down his face because instead of fighting the Mokotów district was giving up.

10:24:56 - 10:25:05

Commentary:

After the surrender, the Germans drove out all the survivors from the city. On Hitler's orders Warsaw was to be razed to the ground in a way that it could never be rebuilt again.

10:25:40 - 10:26:02

Commentary:

The losses of the uprising on the Polish side were: 18 000 soldiers killed, 25 000 injured and approximately 200 000 civilian killed. Most of the killed soldiers were young educated people from Warsaw. 80% of the city was destroyed. Many of them who survived were saved thanks to the sewer system, which is functioning to this day.

10:26:02 - 10:26:17

EWA JEGLIŃSKA

(Liaison of the Home Army)

I will always remember the Uprising as the most beautiful days of my life. I never saw such patriotism and human devotion again.

10:26:18 - 10:26:51

JERZY STEFAN STAWIŃSKI

(Lieutenant of the Home Army and the screenwriter of the film "Kanał")

When I joined the Uprising it made a lot of sense to me. But now I have my doubts. At stake were the lives of a million citizens. People died and their belongings were destroyed, those who managed to escape were almost reduced to beggars with nothing more than a sack on their back. One should question if it was all truly worth it.

10:26:53 - 10:27:27

ANNA JAKUBOWSKA

(Home Army nurse)

I don't think one can objectively pass this down as long as our generation is still alive. To

me it was the most emotional experience in my life. Later on, I don't think anything came close to this. This was something that brought out the best and the most beautiful qualities in people. Perhaps the Solidarity movement did the same thing once again – but on a smaller scale.

10:27:27 - 10:28:11

Song:

I was born a rebel
I would spill my blood for this
I'm going to war in a tram
And the last stop is heaven
Fall down, Get up again, drop dead, and resurrect – I'll do it
I'm sweating, I'm spitting, I'm dying...

10:28:13 - 10:28:22

Song:

Long live the Army, the Air force, the Navy!
Long live the soldiers of the Polish underground!
Long live a free and independent Poland!

(translated into English by Mateusz Dymek)