

Adrian Sandak, *Between patriotism and collaboration 'Musketeers' in the space of activities of the Polish Underground State 1939-1942*

Summary

'The Musketeers' was one of the first Polish underground organisations during the Second World War, established in October 1939 in Warsaw. It dealt primarily with intelligence activities. The head and founder of the organisation, Stefan Witkowski, strived for full independence throughout its existence - in the years 1939-1942. In the initial period of the occupation, it was competition for the ZWZ/AK. This circumstance, as well as involvement in controversial relations and undertakings (attempts to cooperate with Marshal Edward Śmigły-Rydz after his return to the country in 1941, operational games with the Abwehr, alleged contacts with the Gestapo and Soviet intelligence) caused the Musketeers to be disbanded by order of General Stefan Grot-Rowecki, and the Home Army liquidation cell shot Stefan Witkowski in Warsaw.

Many myths, half-truths and outright lies have grown up around the 'Musketeers'. One of these was the opinion that the organisation collaborated with the Germans. Post-war accounts of Home Army officers contradict this and indicate that Stefan Witkowski's unbridled ambition may have led to a disaster for the Polish underground. The vast majority of the organisation's soldiers did not approve of the controversial actions of the 'Engineer' (one of Witkowski's many aliases), such as sending the 'Musketeers' mission to Buzuluk in the Soviet Union to General Anders under the patronage of the Abwehr. In the autumn of 1941, these soldiers transferred to the Home Army and other organisations, where they gained high rank in the fight against the occupying forces. Many took up prominent positions in the intelligence and counterintelligence structures of the Home Army Headquarters.

'The Musketeers' were one of the Polish underground organisations operating on the broad front of the intelligence struggle against the Germans. It existed on the Polish war scene for almost three years and, despite the negative assessment earned by their recalcitrant chief Stefan Witkowski, they served the Polish cause well.