

Wladyslaw Anders, military man, statesman, Lieutenant General

Born: Aug Born: August 11, 1892, Blonie, Russia occupied Poland

Died: May 12, 1970, London (England)

Early days. Wladyslaw Anders was born on August 11th, 1892 in a village less than a hundred miles west of Warsaw.

Higher education. Anders was attending Riga Polytechnic before serving in the Tsar's army during WWI where he led the 1st squadron of the 1st Krechowicki Lancer's Regiment.

Military career. After the war, Anders joined the newly formed Polish Army and was named leader of the original 15th Poznan Lancers Regiment. He led the regiment in battle against the Red Army in the Polish-soviet war of 1919. By the mid-1930s, Anders rose to the rank of general. When Germany invaded Poland in 1939, initiating WWII, he was the Commander of the Nowogrodek Cavalry Brigade. His cavalry fought at Lidzbark but withdrew from the overwhelming German attack.

Captured by the Soviets. Anders was eventually captured by the Soviets as they invaded from the east. He was taken to the infamous Lubianka prison in Moscow where he was interrogated and tortured by the NKVD. His situation changed dramatically when the Nazis invaded Russia. A Soviet-Polish agreement was made for the formation of a new army on the territories of the USSR. Anders was freed and named commanding general. Poles who had been deported from their homes when the Soviet Union invaded Poland were set free from Siberia, Kazakhstan and other regions of USSR to join the new army.

Anders' Army. When General Anders reviewed his troops for the first time, he found them half-starved and in rags. Out of the one and a half million people deported from their homes in Eastern Poland, only a few hundred thousand deportees made it out of Siberia alive. Women, children, and elderly men followed the army as their only chance for survival. The Soviets refused to aid the refugees but General Anders ordered the meager army rations to be split up to feed the refugees. His actions helped many orphans survive their horrible circumstances. Negotiations between Stalin, Churchill, and the Polish forces led to the transfer of the 100,000 people strong II Polish Corps to Iran under British control. The resulting corps became one of the most formidable military formations of the war. Its principal, and unforgettable, achievement was the capturing of Monte Cassino on May 17-18, 1944, after three attempts by others had failed. Anders subsequently led it in the battles up the Adriatic Coast and in the clearance of the Po Valley. He cautioned the Western Allies not to trust the Soviets but his forewarning fell on deaf ears. Hearing of the agreements made at Yalta, he stated, "It is impossible to imagine that humanity has suddenly become blind and has really lost the consciousness of a mortal danger." The Western Allies thought they had won the war but soon realized they had only achieved a stalemate with totalitarianism. After WWII, General Anders lived the rest of his life in England, though he never applied for British citizenship. He considered the Communist government of Poland illegitimate, and himself a Pole in exile.

Member of Council of Three. In 1954, Anders was elected to the Rada Trzech (Council of Three), which was the organ of the executive authority of the Polish emigrants. The two other members of the Council of Three at that time were T. Arciszewski and E. Raczynski. He died in May of 1970 and did not live to see a free Poland. At his request, he was buried with his men at the Polish Cemetery in Monte Cassino. In the Communist Poland, General Anders officially did not exist. But he is now finally recognized by the government of Poland as a national hero. Many streets and schools are now named after him in his homeland.

