Bor-Komorowski knew his initial successes could not be maintained unless the Russian armies assisted his effort.99

When word had reached him on 31 July that Russian tanks had entered the Warsaw suburb of Praga, after already occupying the neighbouring Radosc, Milosna, Okunieuw, Wolomin and Radzymin,100 he relied heavily on their support.101

When Stalin learnt of the revolt, he immediately ordered Marshal Rokossowski to cease all offensive actions towards Warsaw. The intensity of the fighting in Warsaw forced him to change his initial plans, namely to occupy Warsaw and to establish a communist-oriented Polish government, subordinate to the USSR.

By holding back, he allowed the Germans the opportunity to suppress the revolt. He could then step in, carry out the required follow-up and eventually reach the same goals. The Germans' defeat of the Third Armoured Division of the Russian army in the Wolomin-Radzymin area, proved a ready excuse to cease action.102 However, subsequent research confirmed only a minor setback which would not have prevented a Russian victory.103 Zawodny stated:

It is not of paramount importance whether the Russians could take Warsaw or not. What is of paramount importance is that after 8 August they did not try.104

The sudden cessation of Russian action also surprised the Germans. General Heinz Guderian, Inspector-General of the German armoured troops, as well as the Chief of the Army General Staff, later commented in his memoirs:

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102 J.K. Zawodny, Nothing but Honour, p.95.


104 J.K. Zawodny, Nothing but Honour, p.21.
The question has frequently been asked why the Russians did not do more to help the Warsaw uprising and indeed, stopped their offensive along the line of the Vistula. It may be assumed that the Soviet Union had no interest in seeing these elements owing allegiance to the Polish Government-in-exile strengthened by a successful uprising and by liberating their capital. All that concerned us was that the Russians did not then advance beyond the Vistula and we were consequently granted a short breathing spell.105

General P. von Mellenthin, Chief of General Staff 4th Panzer Army, later said that the uprising in Warsaw had looked very threatening, but the tension eased when the Russians failed to push through to link up with the insurgent Poles. The Red Army did nothing to help the Poles.106 The Russians claimed that their long pause outside Warsaw was justified on tactical grounds.107

The key to the success of the revolt therefore lay with the Soviet government, and particularly with Joseph Stalin. But Stalin refused to act because allegedly he regarded the uprising as the work of criminals and irresponsible agitators.

Bor's forces had limited fire power: about 20 machine guns with 35 000 rounds of ammunition; 98 light machine guns with 15 800 rounds; 604 submachine guns with 121 000 rounds; 1 386 rifles with 234 000 rounds; 2 665 pistols and revolvers with 52 000 rounds; two antitank guns with 100 rounds and two antitank rifles with 1 170 rounds. They also had 50 000 grenades and 700 kilograms of explosives.108 The Germans naturally vastly outnumbered the partisans.109 Zawodny stated:

Nowhere during the Second World War was there a battle of such magnitude in which the enemies were so unevenly matched.\textsuperscript{110}

Heinrich Himmler, commander of the German Secret Service (SS), knew of the revolt within half an hour and Hitler immediately ordered him to personally take care of it, putting five detachments of the dreaded Hermann Göring Division at his disposal.\textsuperscript{111} Hitler also decreed that not only partisans, but all inhabitants of Warsaw, be wiped out. There were to be no prisoners. Rape, torture, looting, murder, nothing was forbidden.\textsuperscript{112}

According to G. Bruce, a Polish writer, Warsaw was going to be razed to the ground to set a terrifying example to the rest of Europe.\textsuperscript{113} Bruce was eventually proved accurate in his assessment. Terrible suffering followed: men, women and children were ruthlessly killed or kept in appalling conditions in huge, open-air concentration camps. Yet, although outnumbered and outgunned, the partisans put up fierce resistance and tales of great courage later emerged.\textsuperscript{114}

On 2 August, Komorowski’s forces noticed the Russian Army’s advance had abruptly stopped. Russian planes, until then a familiar sight, disappeared. Russian fire grew silent.\textsuperscript{115}

\section*{3.3 THE STALIN FACTOR IN THE WARSAW REVOLT}

Soon after the Warsaw uprising, it became evident that, unless the Russians launched an assault across the Vistula, the Germans would massacre the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{110} J.K. Zawodny, \textit{Nothing but Honour}, p.60; J. Keegan, \textit{The Second World War}, pp.483-484.
\item \textsuperscript{111} P. Erikson, \textit{Wings over Africa}, June 1978, p.3.
\item \textsuperscript{112} J.K. Zawodny, \textit{Nothing but Honour}, p.55; A. Werth, \textit{Russia at War 1941-1945}, p.874.
\item \textsuperscript{113} G. Bruce, \textit{The Warsaw Uprising}, p.113.
\item \textsuperscript{115} M. Kitchen, \textit{A World in Flames}, pp.281-282.
\end{itemize}
population of Warsaw.\textsuperscript{116} They had already threatened to deport the entire male population should the Russians come closer. All able men therefore had a simple choice: rise up and fight or be killed by the Germans anyway.\textsuperscript{117}

Stalin's eventual aim was the total control of Poland and he early on made his intentions clear by his continued refusal to acknowledge the Polish government-in-exile. For the same reason he also established contact with the communist-oriented National Council of the Homeland. A series of decrees, intended to give this committee supreme command over all the communist-oriented Poles, led to a Committee of National Liberation managing the administration of Poland.

The underlying antagonism in the relationship between the Soviets and Poland created a difficult situation for the Allies. Britain and the United States of America strove for a free and independent Poland, maintaining sound relations with the Soviet Union. Stalin supported this goal, but his definition of a free Polish state differed vastly from those of Britain and the USA.

Stalin had stated on several occasions that he did not recognise any of the underground resistance movements, including the Armia Krajowa. Thus, if Bor-Komorowski's "Operation Burza" had been a success, the Russians would have had to enter Warsaw as guests, not as liberators, since Poland would have owed its freedom to actions of its own citizens. The Soviet Union's position and rights as "liberator" would have been limited and a mutual relationship, simply an alliance, would have barred Russian domination of Poland.

A few days after the uprising on 1 August, the Soviet Union's curtailment of activities had become obvious to the partisans. Therefore, they urgently appealed to the Allied Command in London for ammunition and weapons.\textsuperscript{118}

Churchill contacted Stalin on 4 August, suggesting the actions of the partisans in Warsaw were to the Soviet Union's advantage and urgently asked for supplies and assistance.\textsuperscript{119}

\textsuperscript{116} J. Garlinski, \textit{Poland, SOE and the Allies}, p.197.
\textsuperscript{117} National Archives, Washington DC, Box 22, RG334: Memorandum, Conversation on the battle for Warsaw, C. 26.
\textsuperscript{119} W.S. Churchill, \textit{The Second World War: Triumph and Tragedy}, p.115.
Stalin’s reply referred to the setback in the Wolomin-Radzymin area and claimed he could therefore not comply immediately. He even suggested Churchill’s information regarding the true situation in Warsaw was inadequate and inaccurate.120

Stalin played for time. His answer to Churchill was intentionally vague. Pretending to be gathering additional information regarding the extent of the revolt and whether it was representative of the feeling of all Poles, he neglected to inform Churchill of his previous order to Marshal Rokossowski to immediately cease all offensive actions in the direction of Warsaw. He was also careful not to refuse immediate assistance. However, his whole attitude had created deep suspicions within British government circles.121

Stalin had the power and authority to rush to the aid of the Poles but it was for the sake of hegemony and pure political expediency that he ordered his troops to halt the liberation of Warsaw, pausing literally on the burning city’s doorstep. He used every possible ploy in the book to avoid action which would have enabled the embattled Polish Armia Krajowa to succeed with their revolt. His lieutenants frequently used threats and bullying tactics when negotiating with diplomats from the United States and Britain.

At the insistence of the Allies, the new Polish premier, Mikolajczyk, left for Moscow on 26 July 1944, for talks with the Soviet leader.122 Stalin promised weapons and ammunition would be supplied by air on 9 August and falsely intimated he had ordered Marshal Rokossowski to drop a paratrooper, equipped with a radio transmitter, in Warsaw. His orders allegedly were to establish further contact between the partisans and the Soviet Forces.123

Repeated inquiries later about the whereabouts of this paratrooper were shrugged off by Stalin, suggesting he had probably been killed or captured by the Germans. However, he did not offer to send another.

120 J.K. Zawodny, Nothing but Honour, p.197.
122 The Times, 5 August 1944: Stalin receives Mikolajczyk, p.5.
WARSAW 2 AUGUST 1944: MAP INDICATING THE SECTORS CONTROLLED BY THE ARMIA KRAJOWA, AS WELL AS SECTORS CONTROLLED BY THE GERMAN FORCES
Stalin claimed the defeat of the Third Armoured Corps at the hands of the Germans forced them to withdraw and regroup. The truth is, the revolt had frustrated Stalin's own plans and he had decided not to get involved in the battle.\textsuperscript{124}

After an intense exchange of communications between Britain and the Soviet Union, Churchill realised that Stalin would not intervene in Warsaw. During regular subsequent contacts from 3 August, the Allies constantly requested Stalin to assist the partisans. However, on 16 August Stalin declared he had become thoroughly acquainted with the situation in Warsaw and was convinced it was not representative of the Polish nation, but had been planned by a small group of adventurers, representing a small, insignificant minority. The Soviet Supreme Command therefore felt it advisable to distance itself from this "adventure" and would not accept responsibility, directly or indirectly, for rendering any assistance. Stalin's infamous treachery was also confirmed by Air Marshal Sir John Slessor when disclosing Stalin's refusal to allow even a single participating aircraft to land on Russian airfields.\textsuperscript{125} Stalin reiterated his view that this situation would never have arisen had the partisans first taken counsel with the supreme command of the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{125}

This exposed Stalin's true attitude. The partisans' cause was thus lost, since they were incapable of making a stand against the overwhelming superiority of the German armies, without support from the Red Army.

Air Marshal Sir John Slessor, Officer Commanding the Mediterranean Allied Air Forces in Italy, and Keith Hayward, an historian, view the circumstances which led to the supply flights to Warsaw, as the most cynical, blatant and treacherous conduct in the history of warfare. Slessor describes the Soviet Union's behaviour towards the Polish partisans as the blackest-hearted, coldest-blooded treachery on the part of the Russians.\textsuperscript{127} Hayward


\textsuperscript{125} The use of Soviet airstrips east of Warsaw was technically feasible, but Stalin refused to make them available for Allied aircraft.


\textsuperscript{127} J. Slessor, \textit{The Central Blue}, p.612.
characterises the Soviet Union's action as the most cynical betrayal in the history of warfare.128

It has to be conceded that these remarks were often sparked by an emotional reaction. Slessor and Hayward must have been very frustrated at times with the callous behaviour of the Soviets. Nevertheless the validity of their comments is not in question.

3.4 APPEALS FOR AN AIRLIFT

On 3 August 1944, Bor-Komorowski urgently appealed to the Royal Air Force, which incorporated a special Polish squadron in April 1940, to deliver air supplies to the partisans in Warsaw. Their greatest need was for heavy machine guns, antitank guns, ammunition for antitank guns, and hand grenades.129

The Allies, unlike the Soviets, had little choice but to render some assistance to Poland. Churchill was very much for assisting the Polish people and therefore ordered Air Marshal Sir John Slessor to investigate the possibility and feasibility of supply flights from bases in Italy. Slessor was reluctant at first because he immediately recognised the inherent danger of such flights and expected heavy casualties.130 These flights would take ten to 12 hours to cover the 2,815 kilometres from Italy to Warsaw and back.131 Slessor later wrote:

It was one thing to drop supplies to pre-arranged dropping zones, marked by light signals in open country behind the lines ... it was quite another thing to bring a big aircraft down to a thousand feet, flaps and wheels down to reduce speed, over a great city,

128 The Star, Johannesburg, 23 August 1969: Stalin's cynical betrayal left Warsaw to face the German onslaught, p.5.


itself the scene of fires and flashes from guns and bursting shells.\textsuperscript{132}

This remark by Slessor is very important because he accentuates the fact that there was quite a difference in supplying goods to partisans in the countryside to that of flying as low as 300 metres over a city protected by more than adequate anti-aircraft defences.

Aircraft flying from airfields in Great Britain had been dropping supplies to the partisans in Warsaw on a relatively small scale since September 1943, but these flights had proved too costly for a variety of reasons: the long distance to reach Polish territory; the limited areas which could be supplied; the efficient German defence throughout Northern Europe, as well as generally uncertain weather conditions.\textsuperscript{133}

In November 1943, 1586 Polish Special Duties Flight was moved to Sidi Amor in Tunisia to become part of 334 Wing Balkan Air Force. But, Sidi Amor was unsuitable for heavy aircraft during winter, and therefore 1586 Polish Special Duties Flight was moved to Brindisi in Southern Italy during December.

After examining every aspect of the intended operations, as requested by Borkomorowski on 3 August 1944, Headquarters in Italy concluded that these operations were not a fair risk of war. The involvement of other Allied Squadrons in the airlift to reinforce the Polish Squadrons would also negatively influence the activities of these squadrons in other important spheres.\textsuperscript{134}

Headquarters in Italy submitted these arguments to Chief of Staff in London. They mooted that Soviet authorities, being close to Warsaw and possessing a more detailed knowledge of the situation, might be asked to give the required assistance. Although this request was made, nothing came of it.\textsuperscript{135}

\textsuperscript{132} J. Slessor, \textit{The Central Blue}, p.615.

\textsuperscript{133} British Ministry of Defence, London, Air Historical Branch, File 13: air supply for Warsaw, n.d.

\textsuperscript{134} British Ministry of Defence, London, Air Historical Branch, File 13: air supply for Warsaw, n.d.

\textsuperscript{135} British Ministry of Defence, London, Air Historical Branch, File 13: air supply for Warsaw, n.d.
3.5 CHURCHILL'S EFFORTS TO ASSIST THE POLISH PARTISANS

Although the Allies were reluctant at first, political pressure persuaded the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, to go ahead and order extensive flights to Warsaw, notwithstanding the considerable distance and extremely difficult circumstances that would seriously hamper the supply flights. The Allied Air Force commenced with these supply flights to Warsaw from bases in Italy on 12 August 1944.\(^{136}\)

At the outset the British press alleged the operation was more politically inspired than militarily justifiable.\(^{137}\) The task also differed vastly from usual military procedure when provisions were supplied to resistance movements behind enemy lines. The flight crews received vague instructions and the intensity and accuracy of the enemy's anti-aircraft defence fire was uncertain.

In a letter to the London Observer, dated 16 August 1944, Air Marshal Sir John Slessor conceded he was under political pressure to order the task flights.\(^{138}\) Churchill admitted as much during a personal interview on 14 August 1944 with the officer commanding 205 Group Royal Air Force, Brigadier J.T. Durrant, saying that, militarily speaking, the whole airlift was doomed to fail. Yet, when one considered the political implications, he conceded there simply was no alternative but to continue with the dropping operations.\(^{139}\)

Churchill knew very well that the Polish partisans had acted irresponsibly and that their actions represented a reckless adventure. He was aware of the fact that the partisans were partly responsible for the helpless circumstances in Warsaw. Had they communicated with the Soviets before they launched the uprising, their situation could have been very different.

Churchill's motives at this stage should be seen against the background of the very complicated relations between himself and the United States President, Franklin Roosevelt, and those between Roosevelt and Stalin.

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137 The British Press were very concerned with the situation in Warsaw. Many newspaper reports were published in Britain from July to October 1944.
138 The Observer, 16 August 1944, p.3.
139 J.T. Durrant, Personal interview, Johannesburg, 14 June 1983.
Churchill telegraphed Roosevelt on 18 August 1944:

The refusal of the Soviets to allow the US aircraft to bring succour to the heroic insurgents in Warsaw added to their own complete neglect to fly in supplies when only a few score of miles away constitutes an episode of profound and far-reaching gravity. If as is almost certain the German triumph in Warsaw is followed by a wholesale massacre no measure can be put upon the full consequences that will arise. I am willing to send a personal message to Stalin if you think this wise and if you will yourself send a separate similar message.¹⁴⁰

According to Churchill, the glorious and vital victories by Britain and the United States in France, exceeded in scale anything done by the Russians on any particular occasion. Churchill added that Britain and America were nations serving high causes and that they had to give true counsels towards world peace.¹⁴¹

Churchill wrote to his wife on 18 August:

You ... should see the various telegrams now passing about the Russian refusal, either to help or allow the Americans to help the struggling people of Warsaw, who will be massacred and liquidated very quickly if nothing can be done. These messages speak for themselves. If there is a massacre in Warsaw the whole world will criticise the Soviets and will do so with more freedom if the battle in France proves, as I hope, to be a far larger and more intense military event than anything which Russia has produced.¹⁴² I have been very much taken up with Polish affairs,

working day and night to bring help to the Poles in Warsaw, though the difficulties are great.\textsuperscript{143}

The breach between Stalin and the Warsaw insurgents was complete. Churchill wrote on 23 August:

I see from the papers that the agony of Warsaw has been practically suppressed. There is no need to mention the Soviet behaviour but surely the facts should be given publicity ... it is not for us to cast reproaches on the Soviet Government but surely the facts should be allowed to speak for themselves.\textsuperscript{144}

On 24 August, Churchill received an eyewitness account of the Warsaw rising, covering the five days from August 11 to August 16, and at once despatched a copy by telegram to Roosevelt. The account gave many examples of what it called "the ruthless methods of terror" employed by the Germans in Warsaw.\textsuperscript{145}

Churchill continued to seek ways of asking Stalin to allow British and American aircraft, flying from Britain, to drop supplies on Warsaw and then fly on to Soviet air bases to refuel. Only in this way could they make the long flight. It had also become increasingly clear little time was left for any such help to be effective.

Churchill and Roosevelt therefore drafted a joint telegram to Stalin, requesting the Russians to allow these flights:

We are most anxious to send American planes from England. Why should they not land on the refuelling ground which was assigned to us behind the Russian lines without enquiring as to what they have done on the way? ... we do not try to form an opinion about the persons who instigated this rising which was certainly called for repeatedly by Radio Moscow. Our sympathy lies with the almost unarmed people whose


special faith has led them to attack German guns, tanks and aircraft ... The massacre in Warsaw will undoubtedly be a very great annoyance to us when we all meet at the end of the war. Unless you directly forbid it ... we propose to send the planes.\textsuperscript{146}

Stalin failed to reply, prompting Churchill to inform Roosevelt he felt they ought to go ahead without Stalin's approval, waiting for his reaction. Roosevelt would not agree. He cited two reasons. First, Stalin's unequivocal refusal to allow Soviet airfields to be used by Allied planes dropping supplies on Warsaw and second, America was engaged in negotiations with the Soviets regarding future use of Soviet air bases elsewhere.

This destroyed Anglo-American unity over the issue of aid to Warsaw, leaving Britain by itself. On 3 September, the War Cabinet endorsed the idea that Churchill should try to persuade Roosevelt to reconsider his earlier refusal. It was also agreed to send another message to Stalin, warning him of the effect on future Anglo-Soviet relations.

Churchill's telegram to Roosevelt on 4 September reveals his desperate mood and the urgency of the plight of the Poles in Warsaw. In this telegram he claimed that the only way to bring material help to the Poles was for United States aircraft to drop supplies using Russian airfields for the purpose.\textsuperscript{147}

He again urged Roosevelt to authorise his air forces to carry out the operation, using Russian airfields without their consent, if necessary. Churchill also sent Roosevelt the text of the appeal by the women of Warsaw to the Pope in which they declared:

\textit{Warsaw is in ruins. The Germans are killing the wounded in hospitals. They are making women and children march in front of them in order to protect their tanks. There is no exaggeration in reports of


children who are fighting and destroying tanks with bottles of petrol.\textsuperscript{148}

He added that the Russian armies had not advanced beyond the gates of Warsaw for three weeks.

Roosevelt's reply was again negative. The problem of relief had unfortunately been solved by delay and by German action, and there appeared to be nothing he could do to assist.\textsuperscript{149}

### 3.6 THE ROLE OF THE AMERICANS

The Polish government-in-exile also asked the United States to assist them with the dropping of supplies to the Poles in Warsaw. They were asked to use heavy bombers of the 8th United States Air Force to carry containers with the needed supplies.

From the outset, participation was ruled out as impracticable.\textsuperscript{150} In fact, it was seen by the Americans as not operationally feasible and military personnel completely agreed that the distance to Warsaw was beyond the range of their heavy bombers.\textsuperscript{151}

Also, because of the breach between Stalin and the Polish insurgents in Warsaw, the US Government did not want to jeopardise relations with the Soviet government, by pushing their demands to drop supplies on Warsaw and to use Russian bases.\textsuperscript{152}

The Americans played a curious game. There was a lot of behind-the-scenes manoeuvring and endless conflicts between politicians and militarists; but,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{149} National Archives, Washington DC, Box 22, RG334: Memorandum, Warsaw dropping operations, p.1.
  \item \textsuperscript{150} National Archives, Washington DC, Frantic 7, RG334: Memorandum, Cable USSTAF From Eaker (11355) on restudy of use of Air Force for dropping operations, 12 Aug. 1944.
  \item \textsuperscript{151} National Archives, Washington DC, Box 67, RG334: Memorandum, Cable USSTAF 11355.
  \item \textsuperscript{152} National Archives, Washington DC, Box 22, RG334: Memorandum, Warsaw dropping operations, p.1.
\end{itemize}
ironically, also between politicians and politicians, as well as between militarists and militarists. Their actions were influenced by their fear of offending the Russian bear but at the same time appeasing their Allied friends; they were calculating to the extreme in making sure they pleased both sides. Crafty manipulation by the Russian diplomats kept the Americans on their toes, careful not to offend them. This is aptly illustrated by the Molotov-Harriman exchanges.

The Soviet Foreign Office informed Avril Harriman, US ambassador to Moscow, of their opposition to any "Frantic" operations dropping supplies on Warsaw and strongly objected to any American or British aircraft using Russian airfields.\textsuperscript{153}

On 14 August, Harriman wrote to V.M. Molotov, People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs:

\begin{quote}
Our Air Force command here has received an urgent directive to clear with the Soviet Air Force a request for a flight of American four-engined bombers with a fighter escort to undertake a shuttle operation from England tomorrow morning, weather and operational conditions permitting.\textsuperscript{154}
\end{quote}

Part of the force would drop arms for the Polish resistance forces in Warsaw while the balance would attack an airfield in the vicinity and thence proceed to the bases in the Soviet Union. Harriman indicated the matter had also been taken up with Soviet Air Staff through the usual military channels, but political considerations were necessarily involved.\textsuperscript{155}

Harriman also explained that the distance of the trip by British bombers based in Italy (roughly 3 000 kilometres round-trip) made operations extremely difficult and the quantities dropped too small. The Anglo-American Command

\textsuperscript{153} National Archives, Washington DC, Box 67, RG334: Cable 151525 F.
\textsuperscript{154} National Archives, Washington DC, Box 67, RG334: Memorandum, Cable to Molotov, p.1.
\textsuperscript{155} National Archives, Washington DC, Box 67, RG334: Memorandum, Cable to Molotov, p.1.
had therefore decided the most viable option was a daylight shuttle mission by American bombers to Soviet bases.\textsuperscript{156}

Andrei Vyshinski, Assistant People's Commissioner for Foreign Affairs, replied by letter, refusing Soviet co-operation and objecting to American assistance of the Poles. The Soviet Government was resolute in its refusal to allow American planes to use Russian bases.\textsuperscript{157}

An urgent meeting was convened in Moscow on 15 August 1944. Present were Vyshinski, Harriman, British ambassador Sir Archibald Clark-Kerr, and three secretaries.\textsuperscript{158}

Clark-Kerr stressed they attended the talks as ambassadors. They were, however, also friends concerned about the \textit{impasse} concerning future actions. He also pointed out that the Soviet position did not tally with Stalin's undertaking to Polish Prime Minister Mikolajczyk some weeks before, when he had indicated a willingness to assist the Polish revolt in Warsaw. Supporting the Poles now was in the interest of all concerned, since the heroic action of the Poles had caught the popular imagination in the United States and Great Britain. If the Soviet government's refusal became public knowledge, it would lead to a big outcry and give credence to the rumour that the Red Army had slowed down its offensive towards Warsaw for political reasons.\textsuperscript{159}

Vyshinski agreed to look into the matter again but disagreed on the ambassadors' version of the meeting between Stalin and Mikolajczyk. He stressed the revolt was premature and had been carried out recklessly, an adventure which the Soviets could not support.\textsuperscript{160} Harriman stressed he was not seeking Soviet participation. His only objective was to obtain permission to use Soviet bases during the operation. Vyshinski maintained that agreeing to the request would imply participation. The Red Army was playing the greatest

\textsuperscript{156} National Archives, Washington DC, Box 67, RG334: Memorandum, Cable to Molotov, p.2.

\textsuperscript{157} National Archives, Washington DC, Box 67, RG334: Memorandum, Cable 11753.

\textsuperscript{158} National Archives, Washington DC, Box 67, RG334: Memorandum, Conversation on Dropping of Military Supplies on Warsaw, p.1.

\textsuperscript{159} National Archives, Washington DC, Box 67, RG334: Memorandum, Conversation on Dropping of Military Supplies on Warsaw, p.2.

\textsuperscript{160} National Archives, Washington DC, Box 67, RG334: Memorandum, Conversation on Dropping of Military Supplies on Warsaw, p.3.
role, or rather a great role, in killing Germans. The Soviet Government did not wish to encourage adventurous undertakings which would work against this. The historical record of the Soviet Union would stand for many years on the achievements of the Soviet army and people in their struggle against the Germans, he said. The question of Warsaw did not enter into this.\footnote{National Archives, Washington DC, Box 67, RG334: Memorandum, Conversation on Dropping of Military Supplies on Warsaw, p.4.}

Clark-Kerr still wanted to clear up one point. According to his understanding, Stalin indicated to Mikolajczyk a willingness to assist the Poles. It now seemed some change had taken place in Soviet policy; that the Poles in Warsaw were not worthy of assistance. Vyshinski denied a change in policy, merely a careful weighing of options on how to assist the Poles.\footnote{National Archives, Washington DC, Box 67, RG334: Memorandum, Conversation on Dropping of Military Supplies on Warsaw, p.5.}

On 20 August, Churchill sent Roosevelt the text of a telegram sent from Moscow by Sir Archibald Clark-Kerr, containing a statement by Andrei Vyshinski:

> The Soviet Government cannot of course object to English or American aircraft dropping arms in the region of Warsaw since this is an American and British affair. But they decidedly object to American or British aircraft, after dropping arms in the region of Warsaw, landing on Soviet territory, since the Soviet Government do not wish to associate themselves either directly or indirectly with the adventures in Warsaw.\footnote{M. Gilbert, \textit{W.S. Churchill, Vol. VII, 1941 - 1945: Road to Victory}, p.926.}

On 9 September, the Soviet Government made a surprising move by reiterating its earlier position that members of the Polish \textit{emigré} government in London were responsible for the Warsaw adventure, without consulting with the Russians first. This revolt had subsequently placed the Red Army's operational moves in jeopardy. The Soviets now suggested the appointment of an
unbiased commission to investigate the matter, since it had been conducted in an irregular and irresponsible way.\textsuperscript{164}

Their statement insisted that nobody could accuse the Soviet government of providing inadequate aid to the Poles. To blame the Soviet Government for the dreadful situation in Warsaw, was to shift the responsibility "from a sick head to a clear one."\textsuperscript{165} This statement of the Soviet Government's position on the Warsaw question is apparently contrary to the spirit of Allied co-operation. But the British must also bear some share of the blame. If the British Government had taken steps in good time to warn the Soviet command of the planned uprising, the events in Warsaw would have followed a different course. This seemed to be a repetition of what happened in April 1943 when the Polish \textit{emigré} government accused the Soviet Union of the Katyn massacre.

On 10 September, the Soviet government surprised the Allies by informing the British and American governments that the Soviets were prepared, albeit reluctantly, to allow Allied aircraft to use Russian airfields.\textsuperscript{166} The first American flight, "Frantic 7", was accordingly planned for 14 September but then postponed until the next day because of the weather. One hundred and eight American bombers left Britain for Warsaw on 15 September, but were recalled to their base in Britain after weather conditions had deteriorated to such an extent that they could not carry on with the mission.

On 18 September, "Frantic 7" was launched again and this time three American combat wings of the 8th U.S. Air Force, consisting of 110 B-17 bombers and 64 P-51 fighter aircraft, dropped 1,280 containers of supplies over Warsaw. Only 288 containers of the 1,280 dropped, reached Polish hands.\textsuperscript{167} In the end, this single daytime drop was the only military contribution the Americans made to alleviate the dilemma of Warsaw.

On 23 September, a discussion was held on the subject of the battle for Warsaw, a meeting which conclusively proved the Russians' unwillingness to

\textsuperscript{164} National Archives, Washington DC, Box 22, RG334: Memorandum, Translation of message of the Soviet Government, Cable 16572, p.1.

\textsuperscript{165} National Archives, Washington DC, Box 22, RG334: Memorandum, Translation of message of Soviet Government, Cable 16572, p.2.

\textsuperscript{166} National Archives, Washington DC, Box 22, RG334: Cable 16572, p.1.

\textsuperscript{167} R.C. Lucas, \textit{The RAF and the Warsaw Uprising}, p.193.
become too involved, except on their own terms. Amongst those representing the Allies were Harriman, and Clark-Kerr while Stalin was assisted by Molotov.\(^{168}\)

Stalin was not satisfied with the progress of the battle for Warsaw, stating that the Vistula had proved to be a tremendous obstacle. It had been impossible to get tanks across the river because of continual heavy German shelling and it was difficult to carry on operations without tanks. Even medium tanks could not be ferried across the river because of German vigilance. They could not take Warsaw by frontal assault because of the advantageous position of the Germans. The Russian plan was to encircle the city and cut off German communications so that the Nazis would find themselves in a "mousetrap".\(^{169}\)

Harriman enquired about contact with resistance groups in Warsaw and Stalin informed the meeting some infantry battalions had been ferried across the Vistula to support the resistance groups. He also indicated that, after taking Praga, the Russians had a clearer picture of the Warsaw situation. The insurgents were still fighting in four different isolated parts of the city, attempting to defend themselves, but with no offensive capability. The insurgents had beaten off some German attacks but had to remain in hiding. They had no artillery and were equipped only with rifles and pistols. The Russians had dropped mortars, Tommy guns, food and medical supplies and the Red Army was in contact with the groups both by radio and through individuals who swam across the Vistula. It was now clear, he continued, that few of the supplies dropped by the Americans and British planes from high altitudes had actually reached the Poles. Most of these supplies had been scattered by the wind, in some cases up to 30 kilometres away. Stalin explained the Russians had used single-engined night-training planes at an altitude of 300 to 400 metres to drop supplies and receipt had been acknowledged. Harriman was quick to point out the British came through at night at 60 to 120 metres and it was thought that they had been successful.\(^{170}\) American planes had attempted drops by day from a high altitude.

\(^{168}\) National Archives, Washington DC, Box 22, RG334: Memorandum, Conversation on the Battle for Warsaw, C 26.

\(^{169}\) National Archives, Washington DC, Box 22, RG334: Memorandum, Conversation on the Battle for Warsaw, C 26.

\(^{170}\) National Archives, Washington DC, Box 22, RG334: Memorandum, Conversation on the Battle for Warsaw, C 27.
According to Soviet estimates, Stalin argued, there were only about 2500 to 3000 armed insurgents in the above-mentioned four areas. There were also active sympathisers who could not participate because they had no weapons. The insurgents also intermingled with the Germans, making bombing or shelling of German positions very difficult. Stalin then offered his theory why the insurrection started prematurely: the Germans had threatened to deport the entire male population of Warsaw as the Red Army approached Warsaw. The Poles had no option but to fight - either option meant death. This forced the majority of the population of Warsaw underground to fight the Germans. The four Red Army battalions despatched into Warsaw, Stalin claimed, could not really go underground to assist the mutineers, since the insurgents were hiding themselves in drain pipes and sewers - something very difficult for soldiers in uniform to do.171

General Bor was also nowhere to be found, Stalin announced, and had no contact with the insurgent groups, which operated independently. He suggested he had obviously left the city, "commanding a radio station in some unknown place", probably too afraid to establish contact. The Soviets, on the other hand, maintained direct contact with the insurgents, Stalin said.172

Warsaw now resembled Praga at its liberation, Stalin recalled, when the entire population was found starving. The Germans had withheld food from the inhabitants and had used police dogs to hunt out the male population to deport them for slave labour.173

On 28 September, the Americans announced their next planned shuttle, "Frantic 8". However, weather conditions remained unfavourable until 2 October, when the Russians withdrew their earlier permission for the use of their airfields.174

171 National Archives, Washington DC, Box 22, RG334: Memorandum, Conversation on the Battle for Warsaw, C 27.
172 National Archives, Washington DC, Box 22, RG334: Memorandum, Conversation on the Battle for Warsaw, C 27.
173 National Archives, Washington DC, Box 22, RG334: Memorandum, Conversation on the Battle for Warsaw, C 28.
174 National Archives, Washington DC, Box 67, RG334: Memorandum, Conversation on the Battle for Warsaw, p.54.
By the end of September 1944, the conditions in Warsaw were critical. People were starving and the sick and wounded were dying daily. Continued resistance was impossible due to a serious ammunition shortage and on 28 September General Bor-Komorowski informed his superiors in London he had no alternative but to surrender. After negotiations with the Germans, the rebels surrendered on 5 October 1944. Of the approximately 40,000 men and women members of the underground army, roughly 15,000 died.175 The city itself was in virtual ruins.

Three weeks later the Russian forces entered Warsaw, met by grim scenes of devastation and the decomposing bodies of partisans who had not been buried.176

3.7 CONCLUSION

This revolt was one of the most disastrous in the history of modern warfare. However, in terms of the Allied war effort, it was not a total failure. Nearly 10,000 Germans were killed, 7,000 went missing and 7,000 were wounded.177 This meant a loss of manpower, something the Germans could ill afford at that stage of the war.

The opening words of the last message received from Warsaw are a reminder of this infamous episode:

This is the stark truth. We were treated worse than Hitler’s satellites, worse than Italy, Romania, Finland. May God, who is just, pass judgement on the terrible injustice suffered by the Polish nation, and may He punish accordingly all those who are guilty.178

176 J.K. Zawodny, Nothing but Honour, p.196.
The consequences were grave. The difficult Polish question now became the conscience of the West, and relations between Britain and the Soviet Union were irreparably damaged. As the European war entered its last phase, the shadow of Warsaw clouded British strategic thought.\textsuperscript{179} Churchill was very concerned with the position of the Polish people but he surely also had political esteem to take into consideration.

Let us consider the alternative for the Russians.

If the Russians had rushed to the aid of the Poles, as they had promised in broadcasts from Moscow, the cumbersome and dangerous flights from Italy by the Liberators would not have been necessary. Russian trucks could have delivered the necessary supplies to the city within hours if they had the infrastructural facilities to provide the service. Also, had the Russian soldiers entered the city, the German \textit{Wehrmacht} would have had to fight the Polish underground on the one side and the well-equipped Russian Red Army on the other.\textsuperscript{180}

In fact, when Bor-Komorowski surrendered on 2 October 1944, the partisans had vainly tried for 63 days to liberate their capital, losing 15,000 men in the process with another 25,000 wounded, 6,500 of them seriously. Total civilian casualties were estimated at 180,000.\textsuperscript{181}

When Churchill addressed the House of Commons on 5 October 1944, he paid poignant tribute to the heroic stand of the Polish people:

\begin{quote}
I am sure that I am expressing the feelings of the House, as well as those of His Majesty's Government, in paying tribute to the heroic stand of the Polish Home Army and of the Polish civilian population at Warsaw. Their resistance to overwhelming odds, under inconceivable conditions of hardship, came to an end on 3 October, after a fight which lasted 63 days. .... because of the strong German positions on the Vistula the Poles could not turn the tide....
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{180} In chapter 12 the non realisation of this scenario will be discussed in greater detail.

\textsuperscript{181} W.S. Churchill, \textit{The Second World War: Triumph and Tragedy}, p.128.
In the battle for Warsaw, terrible damage has been inflicted upon that noble city, and its heroic population has undergone sufferings and privations unsurpassed even among the miseries of this war. The final fall of Warsaw, at a time when Allied Armies were victorious everywhere, and when the final defeat of Germany is in sight, must come as a very bitter blow to all Poles.... When the final Allied victory is achieved, the epic of Warsaw will not be forgotten. It will remain for the friends of freedom all over the world.\textsuperscript{182}

Twenty years later, in 1964, Lord Attlee, former leader of the British Labour Party, who served under Churchill as deputy Prime Minister, remarked:

The Warsaw Rising was one of the most heroic episodes in the last war. The insurgents fought furiously for many days, not only in the streets of Warsaw, but even in the sewers. Yet they were defeated on account of the shameful behaviour of Stalin, which must not be forgotten. The Red Army was near Warsaw and could have come to the aid of the Poles at any moment, yet the insurgents were thrown on their own resources. I believe there is not an instance in the whole history of war of soldiers being thus abandoned in a fight for freedom.\textsuperscript{183}

One of the first questions that rose among the Allied air crews, upon hearing about their task of participating in the Warsaw operations, was why the supply could not have been done by the Russians. Air Marshall Sir John Slessor accused the Russians of betraying Bor's army and leading to the "fruitless sacrifice of many airmen". He condemned the Kremlin and predicted that after this incident no responsible statesman could trust any "Russian Communist".\textsuperscript{184}

\textsuperscript{182} Hansard, House of Commons, Vol.403, Warsaw, p.1139.

\textsuperscript{183} T. Zawadski, The USSR and the Warsaw rising of 1944: Facts and Documents, p.27.

\textsuperscript{184} J. Slessor, The Central Blue, p.612.
Various interpretations are possible. The fact is, although the Russians did have the logistic ability, they most probably did not have any supplies available since their own might have been exhausted by then. These matters will be dealt with in more detail later in the thesis.