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ARNHEM, /Interview with the Chairman of the Polish
Paratroopers Association/

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COMPERE: We are glad to have in our studio the Chairman of the Union of Polish Paratroopers. He is not a regular soldier. Before the war the Chairman of this Union worked as a barrister in Silesia. He is now 49 years old. He made his first parachute jump in 1941 when he was 40 years old, which is more than ¹⁵~~50~~ years above the upper age limit fixed for British paratroopers. The upper age limit for Polish paratroopers was somewhat higher and was stipulated at 32 years. But we can see that exceptions were being made. Our visitor, who had a serious accident at the third jump, which however did not prevent him to take part in the battle of Arnheim is now again working as a barrister.
- Can you tell us something about the formation of the Brigade:

KARPINSKI: With pleasure. The first Parachute Brigade was established as a large formation of the Polish Army on September 23rd, 1941. It was created at a time when the war was entering a period which seemed to be one of hopeless stagnation, when only the fleets and the air forces were fighting while the land army immobilised in the British Islands was waiting for something to happen. The Brigade adopted as its motto "by the shortest way", which expressed our longing to be back and to fight on Polish soil. This motto reminded the paratrooper that in everything he was doing, he should try in the most direct way to reach his objective. The only possible way which led to Poland was in the air, and that is why the parachute seemed to us to solve the problem of the distance which separated us from Poland.

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COMPERE: May I make a digression with a question which I shall make as a hundred percent layman. I should like to know if the jump with a parachute is really so difficult and dangerous.

KARPINSKI: The jump to the parachute is still stimulating peoples imagination and is considered as an extraordinary gallant and courageous deed. For us, paratroopers, it is only in the nature of a discharge of duty and a purely personal victory over oneself. The unusual nature of a parachute rests in forming certain qualities of character which to a greater degree than in the other arms unite us.

COMPERE: But I cannot imagine a parachute jump without a stiffling sense of fear.

KARP: Well, everyone of us is always scared before a jump. Before the jump one never knows if within a number of seconds ^{one} ~~we~~ will touch the ground more or less gently, but never too gently or whether Mother Earth will swallow one up for ever. This is the additional risk which a paratrooper~~x~~ has to take. On the whole a life of hazards is contrary to human nature and the purely animal instinct of selfpreservation constitutes a powerful break which hampers and sometimes paralyses human will.

The paratrooper knows this conflict. Nevertheless he must suppress the instinct in order to discharge his duty and to entrust his life to Providence. The struggle against the instinct is not easy. But as a compensation this victory over oneself is perhaps the most joyous inner experience in the life of a man. Everyone of us passes through this struggle and that may be the reason why paratroopers feel drawn to each other and form a unity.

COMPERE: This means that in the Paratroop Community reigned an atmosphere of exceptional friendliness and comradeship.

KARPINSKI: O yes. Because the success of a jump depends ~~scxxxxxx~~ to a certain extent on the behaviour of the other members of a paratroop team. ~~xxxxx~~ No-one must fail as the saying goes or to delay his jump.

KARPINSKI

cont.. As a result, confidence in the team spirit is produced and no-one need fear that he will be let down by his comrades, mutual respect grows. These qualities gave a peculiar stamp to our soldierly community in the Parachute Brigade.

COMPERE: I remember that the standart in the possession of the Brigade has been embroidered by Polish women in Warsaw and sent to Great Britain during the war. What happened to this Standart?

KARPINSKI: Our Standart which the soldiers of the Brigade cherished all the more because ~~it~~ it was sent from Warsaw had been deposited together with 26 Standarts of other Units of the Polish Armed Forces in the ^{Gen. Sikorski} Historical Institute in London.

COMPERE: And what happened to the soldiers of the Brigade?

KARPINSKI: Of course, after the war, we were faced by the question "What now? A number of our comrades decided to go back to Poland. Their decision has found a friendly understanding with those who chose a different course. The departing comrades were seen off by the Commander and their remaining comrades in the same way as a dear member of a family is being seen off.

We are proud that during that dramatic period when the decision of a part of our comrades was so strikingly different from that of the majority, that this fact has not impaired our friendly feelings, our comradeship, our mutual trust and respect which united us at a time when our common longing was represented so aptly with the Blessed Shield deposited in the Polish Church during the war. It carried the words: "Most Holy Mother let us be the first in the struggle to reach our Country".

COMPERE: You said that the majority of the soldiers remained in exile. How did those who remained get on?

KARPINSKI: To-day they are scattered throughout the world, In Australia, Africa, South and Central America in the United States and Canada and on the Continent of Europe. However the majority of those

who could not reconcile themselves with the ~~firm~~ thought of returning to Poland, remained in Britain. At the beginning we did not keep any closer contact. The longing however for a renewal of that comradeship, which ~~firmly~~ prevailed in the Brigade was so great, that already at the end of 1947 we were thinking of creating an Association of Polish Paratroopers, which was eventually established in 1948.

COMPERE: And what are the aims and tasks of that Association?

KARPINSKI: First of all we ~~want~~ want to continue the traditions of the Parachute Brigade and its struggle for a free and independent Poland. Secondly, we look after the welfare of the families of those of our colleagues who were killed and finally we are helping our Comrades, in the first instance the invalided ones in their everyday difficulties. Only a paratrooper who served for at least six months in the Brigade can become a member of the Union or those who are entitled to the Polish Parachute Badge. The Association is a democratic organization, ruled by the will of the majority and its officers are being annually elected by the general meeting.

COMPERE: How have the soldiers of the Brigade settled in Civil life?

KARPINSKI: Materially we find ^{it} on the whole somewhat difficult. Everyone of us must try to make a living by hard work. Many of us found out that pre-war professional qualifications are altogether useless in the existing conditions. It was necessary to roll up the sleeves and begin everything afresh. But we are not discouraged by the difficulties and as befits paratroopers, we shall certainly manage, and we shall get on. It must be emphasized however that there is a considerable number of comrades who thanks to their professional qualifications had no difficulty in finding employment in mining, agriculture and in the textile industry. After a few weeks they were able to establish themselves. I also include in this group the comrades who are continuing their scientific or professional studies and are receiving scholarships reserved for

Exercicemen which assures^{to}/them a modest living for the time of their studies.

In any case, looking backwards over the years on the process of settling in civil life, we must say that the friendly attitude of the British people and the help shown by the British authorities deserve the highest appreciation. We are grateful to the country which despite its own difficulties had not treated us as undesirable aliens and ~~independent~~ intruders.

COMPERE: And how many members are there now in the Association?

KARPINSKI: According to our books, there should be in Great Britain over a thousand former Polish paratroopers. But it is difficult to trace them all because they are scattered throughout the country. Nevertheless our Association numbers 521 members and the membership is increasing from month to month as the knowledge of its existence and the activities of the Association reaches those comrades who are separated from Polish communities.

COMPERE: And what is the relationship between between the Polish and the British Paratroop Association?

KARPINSKI: The best possible. When we began efforts to help our comrades in settling in civil life, our financial resources were very limited. But our British comrades in arms ~~helped~~ organised into the Parachute Regimental Association helped us. Apart from that they have the Foundation of Airborne Forces Security Fund, whose aim is to help British paratroopers in hardship. But the activities of this Foundation embrace also Polish airmen and the best proof of their generosity is the fact that in the last 15 months, our Polish comrades in financial difficulties, received from this Fund the sum of £ 1.490.15.2 in the form of ^{free} grants. Apart from that, our ^{British} comrades decided to grant members of our Association the membership of their Union. This decision was taken unanimously and the atmosphere in which this decision was taken is best illustrated by the speech delivered by one of the former Commanders of the British Paratroop Brigade, who among other things

"It is not sufficient just to accept our Polish colleagues. We should also let them know that we are proud to have them in our midst".

COMPERE: In other words, the war time "Comradeship in Arms" still prevails?

KARPINSKI: In the fullest meaning of the words. That's why we still feel "a part of the paratroop community". When for instance, on July 19th the King in the presence of the Queen was presenting the Banner to the British Paratroop Regiment, among the guests invited by general Montgomery ~~was~~ - the honorary Commander of the Regiment, was the Commander of the First Polish Paratroop Brigade general Sosabowski and as a representative of the former Polish paratroopers - the Chairman of our Association.

COMPERE: And do you have any contact with ~~xxxx~~ Paratroopers Associations of any other Allied contry?

KARPINSKI: Yes. And everywhere we meet with the same heartfelt atmpsphere of comradeship. The paratroopers of the 82nd American Airborne Division with whom we fought in the Arnhem Battle, offered to us ~~xxxxxxx~~ affiliation with their Association on the same lines as the British. The Australians have recognised as a member every Polish airman, who settled in Australia. The African paratroopers sent us an assurance that every Polish paratrooper on their territory will be welcomed with open arms. All this is another proof of the heartfelt comradeship, linking all airmen, regardless of nationality; ~~xxxxxxxx~~

COMPERE: And how does the matter of Invalids stand?

KARPINSKI: Invalids receive a pension, which in cases of whole disability ~~xxxxxxx~~ to earn a living, amounts to 2.5.0 a week. This is very little and that's why some of them must have additional financial help. But those, who are able to earn some extra money in addition to their pension, are quite well off. This applies even to the Blind Disabled Ex-Servicemen, who were trained at St. Dunstans in many professions and work at present even as turners.

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KARPINSKI

cont: The biggest hardship are facing those of our comrades, who in the years 1939 - 1941 got the T.B. as a result of the imprisonment in the Russian camps and are therefore ~~wholly~~ ~~entirely~~ unable to earn their living. They are mostly placed in Hostels for disabled Ex-Servicemen, and in cases ~~of~~ of virulent T.B. - in hospitals. Our Association is first of all concerned with help to those of our comrades,

COMPERE: ~~And~~ And have you, in connection with the Brigade Day organised any special ceremonies?

KARPINSKI: No. We simply ~~gather~~ assemble together with our Commanders at the Banner, to pay tribute to our Country and to the memory of the Fallen. ^{With} This modest and silent ceremony ^{we want} ~~is~~ to express our feelings and prove that we are faithful to the motto of our Banner and that ~~we~~ in our thoughts we are united with all our comrades throughout the world, who remained true to our aim: ~~to~~ "By the Shortest Way" .

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