

11th March 2017

Why Poland is celebrating the National Day of Remembrance of the Cursed Soldiers?



[<https://3.bp.blogspot.com/-SaIK8ArK-IQ/WMQMhhoW1BI/AAAAAAAAACE/7EMaaQG4wKQqdiFXfN0g-kqgx4GHTooHgCLcB/s1600/Cursed%2BSoldiers%2BHeader.png>] A story about Polish anti-communist underground freedom fighters

We have been sold by the west. If there will be no conflict with the east, we have no chances. The communistic roller will beat us into the ground. Nobody knows what will come, we need to fight.

These were the words of one of those who in the World War Two aftermath stood against the Soviet Russia occupation of Poland; with no hope, and abandoned by the allied governments of the west, Michał Bierzyński (codename Sęp) and his fellow soldiers of Polish Underground forces fought until the end as there was no last order to surrender. Later they became known as the legendary figures of Polish independence, called the **Cursed Soldiers** [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cursed_soldiers] (aka Doomed Soldiers), as the ones who had been fiercely loathed and hunted down by communists in years 1944-1963.

The fight against Soviet Russia occupation

Right after when the Nazi Germany occupation was ended in Poland (1945), and allied countries celebrated the triumph over German aggressors; Soviet Russia reign took over Poland and started its rule with terror and fierce actions to disarm all active partisan and underground military groups, the remnants of **Home Army** [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Home_Army] (Armia Krajowa), Polish Army and other organisations. It is said that about 120-180 thousand Polish people joined the fight against the occupation, of which 13-17 thousand were actual fighters, soldiers of Polish Underground. The forces at enemy's disposal were massive. Polish historians count of about 150 thousand forces including three Russian divisions, officials of **Secret Political Police** [[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ministry_of_Public_Security_\(Poland\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ministry_of_Public_Security_(Poland))] , NKVD [<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NKVD>] and militia; not mentioning huge reserves on Ukraine's and Belarus' territories. In 1947 communists proclaimed amnesty for all soldiers fighting in underground and for those conspiring against Stalinists. Most of those who turned up were immediately incarcerated, tortured and faced death sentences. After amnesty only a number of 1800 Cursed Soldiers continued their fight.

Profiles of the Cursed Soldiers

Cavalry captain **Witold Pilecki** [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Witold_Pilecki] was a WWI veteran and Polish intelligence officer who during the WWII organised an underground organisation called **Secret Polish Army** [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secret_Polish_Army] (Tajna Armia Krajowa). He was the one behind the masterplan to get into the Auschwitz



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[OnxCQ7rK76YF8S0yDajL76X6aCACLcB/s1600/Witold_Pilecki_in_color.jpg](https://1.bp.blogspot.com/-mqLaKN0_0d0/WMK1Mh7OvNI/AAAAAAAAA8/hIY7T-OnxCQ7rK76YF8S0yDajL76X6aCACLcB/s1600/Witold_Pilecki_in_color.jpg)

concentration camp and gather intel on the situation in Oswiecim; at that time there was not much information about the on-going extermination of Jews by Nazi German soldiers. He volunteered to realise the plan and willingly let himself to be captured by German troops in order to get into Auschwitz. Thanks to his devotion the world soon learnt about the death industry running in the camp. He also organised a resistance movement inside the camp. Later he joined the **Warsaw Uprising in 1944** [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warsaw_Uprising]. Two years after the war he was caught by Stalinist secret police (UB) while working undercover and collecting crime evidences of communist regime; tortured and sentenced to death, died in Mokotow Prison (Rakowiecka) in Warsaw in 1948. His deeds hadn't been revealed until the collapse of communism in Poland in 1989.



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[/EpZAFnleX4U0nGmdt-ft2IKVpeSyLk9bgCLcB/s1600/%25C5%2581upaszka1.jpg](https://1.bp.blogspot.com/-r6vXkKA0NDY/WMPbnJzsX-I/AAAAAAAAABM)]

Major Zygmunt Szendzielarz [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zygmunt_Szendzielarz] (codename Łupaszko) was a legendary commander known for his outstanding deeds during the WWII. While the Home Army was in the middle of the September Campaign in 1939, his squadron found itself surrounded by Germans, although he and his men had to surrender, after few days he managed to escape. In 1942 he organised intelligence net in the far-eastern territories. A year later once again he joined Wilno Home Army Unit and this date marks the beginning of existence of his famous **5th Wilno Brigade** [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Home_Army_5th_Wilno_Brigade], later named as The Death Squadron (in 1944). The title was earned by fearlessness, steadfastness and bravery showed in actions against Soviet partisans (who suffered great losses) and communistic establishments. Łupaszko presented a strict rigour and fatigues in commanding his soldiers. The brigade continued its fight against communists until 1946, after this year major and his soldiers went into deep conspiracy. He was captured in 1948 by Stalinists in Osielec and imprisoned for two and a half year. In a communist trial he received fourteen fold death sentence; in 1951 killed with a shot at a head. His corpse was exhumed in 2013, until then there had been no information of his body's whereabouts.



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Danuta Siedzikówna [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Danuta_Siedzik%C3%B3wna] (codename Inka) belonged to Polish Home Army and collaborated in Polish underground against communists. In 1945 she was arrested by NKVD, but luckily a patrol from 5th Wilno Brigade rescued her from prison. She joined one of the squadrons under Łupaszka's command. In 1946 she was captured by Stalinist secret police (UB), accused of actions against communist officers, imprisoned, tortured and beaten. In a trial she was sentenced to death despite her young age of 17. Right before the execution she showed extraordinary courage by shouting "Long live Poland". After the execution squad fired she was still alive, eventually she was executed by 2nd Lt. Franciszek Sawicki. In 2006 Polish president Lech Kaczynski awarded her with Polonia Restituta.

The last of the Cursed Soldiers Józef Franczak [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J%C3%B3zef_Franczak] (codename Lalek) died in 1963 in a fight when communists came to capture him near his hometown Kozice Górne. After the war he took part in actions against Polish and Soviet communists. Over 18 years Stalinists had been seeking for him and organised different ambushes involving even hundreds of militia. Eventually, he was caught by a betrayal of a relative of his lover.



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5th Wilno Brigade, 1945 (wikimedia)

The legend of the cursed soldiers in nowadays Poland

If the silence about our heroes won't be broken, the stones will be calling.

Throughout the whole era of Soviet occupation in Poland (1945-1989), the truth about all anti-communistic underground

movement and its heroes had been suppressed by the communist propaganda. The legend of the Cursed Soldiers was fiercely battled and put in denial. Communists portrayed the cursed ones as criminals and villains that were involved in serious murderous atrocities and genocides on Polish and other nations. They were the ones unwanted that stood in the way between Soviet and Polish unification. The fact is that in the time of such propaganda (after WWII) thousands of Polish underground soldiers were incarcerated, tortured, killed and buried in unknown places (mass graves), it was all done by Secret Political Police (UB) and NKVD. Only after the fall of communism in 1989 the truth about their fate was finally revealed. However, old generations of Polish communists or people deeply rooted in communism tend to still perceive them as criminals, and their attitude is strongly ambivalent towards the cursed ones.

Since 2011 Poland has been celebrating the 1st of March as the National Remembrance Day of the Cursed Soldiers.

Check out these materials:

- A dedicated website with stories about the Cursed Soldiers: www.doomedsoldiers.com [<https://www.blogger.com/www.doomedsoldiers.com>]
- One of the best documentaries about Witold Pilecki: [Pilecki \(2015\)](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt5145444/?ref_=nv_sr_1) [http://www.imdb.com/title/tt5145444/?ref_=nv_sr_1]
- A film about the most famous cursed soldier: [History of Roj](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt5527316/?ref_=nv_sr_1) [http://www.imdb.com/title/tt5527316/?ref_=nv_sr_1]
- See the film about Warsaw Uprising in 1944: [Warsaw 44](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt3765326/?ref_=login) [http://www.imdb.com/title/tt3765326/?ref_=login]

Sources:

Nowak, Szymon "Oddziały Wyklętych" (The Divisions of the Cursed), 2017.

The Doomed Soldiers, <http://www.doomedsoldiers.com/> [<http://www.doomedsoldiers.com/>].

Wikipedia.

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