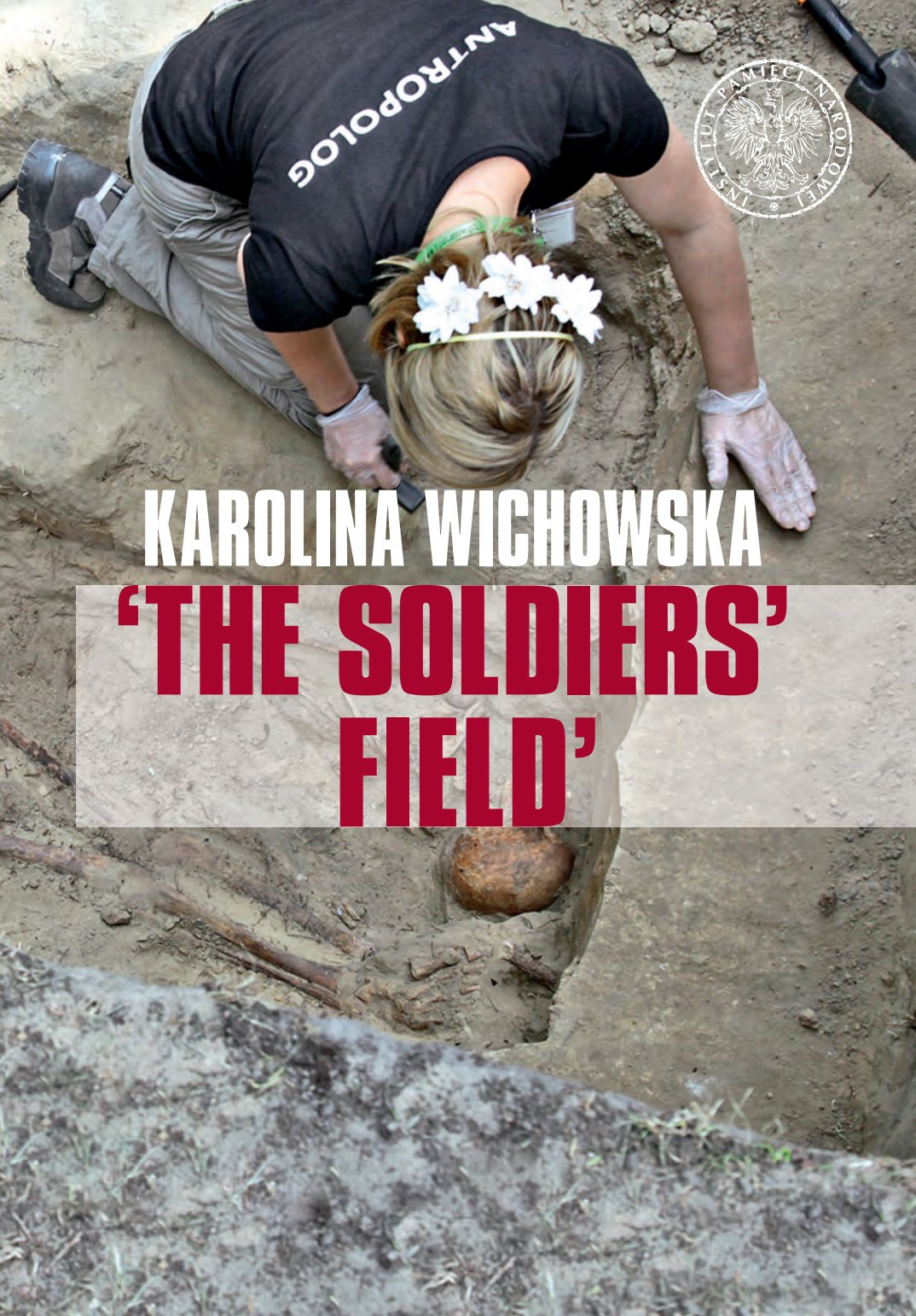


ANTROPOLOG



KAROLINA WICHOWSKA

**'THE SOLDIERS'  
FIELD'**









# 'THE SOLDIERS' FIELD'







THE INSTITUTE OF NATIONAL REMEMBRANCE  
THE COMMISSION FOR THE PROSECUTION OF CRIMES AGAINST THE POLISH NATION

**Karolina Wichowska**

**‘THE SOLDIERS’ FIELD’**

**THE EXCAVATION AND IDENTIFICATION  
OF COMMUNIST TERROR VICTIMS BURIED  
IN THE POWĄZKI CEMETERY IN WARSAW**

**Translated by Anna Brzostowska  
and Jerzy Giebuftowski**



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## BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

*Speech given by the Chairman of the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), Lukasz Kamiński, at the Presidential Palace on 1 March 2015*

Mr. President, the families of the victims of communism, ministers, Mr. Vice-Chancellor, ladies and gentlemen, this year is the fifth time that we celebrate the National Day of Remembrance for the Accursed Soldiers. The bill regarding its introduction was brought before Parliament in February 2010 by the President of Poland Lech Kaczyński. Passed with an overwhelming majority of votes after its endorsement by the President of Poland Bronisław Komorowski, it was then signed into law. The road to the establishment of this national holiday has been long.

It was necessary to break the propaganda lie, which had been constructed for decades, and the organised oblivion. The first research on the history of the post-war pro-independence underground was undertaken by Polish immigrants. Publications devoted to that phenomenon were also published in the second circulation in the 1980s. Launching broader research became possible only after the fall of the communist regime, with two milieus of historians playing a special role: those centred around Professor Tomasz Strzembosz and those associated with the *Zeszyty Historyczne WiN* editing staff, directed since 1994 by Professor Janusz Kurtyka, later IPN chairman and a great advocate of the establishment of this national holiday. At the same time the efforts began to reinstate the memory of soldiers of the pro-independence underground among Poles.

The first to organise an exhibition devoted to the Accursed Soldiers, the Republican League did the most in that regard. It was in the title of that exhibition that the expression ‘Accursed Soldiers’ was first used, later popularised by Jerzy Ślaski in the title of his book. The 1989 changes enabled the veteran milieus to associate freely. They too played a major role in the restoration of the memory of the post-war underground, with the World

Union of Home Army Veterans, the ‘Freedom and Independence’ Union Social and Veteran Association, the Union of National Armed Forces Soldiers, and the Union of Underage Political Prisoners ‘Jaworzniacy’ among the most active organisations.

The founding of the Institute of National Remembrance was a breakthrough moment in the process of commemorating the Accursed Soldiers. Most of the scholars of that subject matter found employment in the Institute. Many new researchers appeared too. The Institute’s archive received documents on the history of the post-war underground, most of which had been unavailable to historians. Many investigations regarding repressions against heroes of the Polish underground also yielded important findings. It also became possible to launch broad educational activity, which has managed to change the awareness of the public. I shall mention only two of the Institute’s numerous activities. For many years it ran a research project, which concluded in early 2007 with the publication of the monumental *Atlas polskiego podziemia niepodległościowego 1944–1956* – the first comprehensive study of the post-war underground. The team of a few dozen people was directed by Professor Rafał Wnuk and Doctor Sławomir Poleszak. The purpose of the other project, *On the Track of Crime*, was documentation and education. Directed by Doctor Tomasz Łabuszewski, it led to establishing the location of hundreds of forgotten places of detention, torture, and murder of soldiers of the Polish pro-independence underground. Published in the form of an album (*Śladami zbrodni. Przewodnik po miejscach represji komunistycznych lat 1944–1956*), the project’s findings are used during search efforts. As far as the crime scenes are concerned, one cannot forget about the physical forms of commemoration such as monuments and plaques. Most credit for that should go to the ‘We Remember’ Foundation, but the Council for Protection of Memory of Combat and Martyrdom (ROPWiM) also made its contribution, both when its director was Minister Andrzej Przewoźnik and under the leadership of Minister Andrzej Krzysztof Kunert.

Ladies and gentlemen, the substantiation of the bill regarding the introduction of today’s holiday reads: “The National Day of Remembrance for the Accursed Soldiers is to be an expression of tribute to the soldiers of the second underground for their valour, unwavering patriotic stance, devotion to pro-independence traditions, and the blood they shed in defence of their Homeland.”



Today these words have become a reality. This national holiday is an expression of the actual homage we pay to the heroes of this holiday. This year alone the number of undertakings initiated or co-organised by the IPN has exceeded three hundred. And there are many others in which we do not participate. They are prepared in cooperation with local communities, associations, schools, and both local and state authorities. Fine artists, writers, and musicians also present the Accursed Soldiers' history using their own forms of expression. More importantly, their history reaches the young, born in free Poland. And it does not only reach them, but it also moves and inspires them. Such a swift change in social awareness was enabled largely by the excavations and exhumations of the communist terror victims launched in 2011. The sight of the mass graves of Polish heroes and their carefully lifted shattered remains reached millions of Poles and moved many of them due to the engagement of the mass media.

The project to locate the graves of the victims of communism was initiated by the IPN and the ROPWiM, which were quickly joined by the Ministry of Justice following Minister Krzysztof Kwiatkowski's decision. We have also signed a cooperation agreement with the Wrocław Medical University (PUM).

Most works are directed by Professor Krzysztof Szwaagrzyk, the IPN Chairman's attorney and the head of an Independent Search Department, with some of them performed within the framework of the investigations run by IPN prosecutors.

Furthermore, the genetic identification of the remains found has been in progress since 2012. It was enabled by the agreement between the IPN and the PUM in Szczecin regarding the establishment of a Polish Genetic Database of Victims of Totalitarian Regimes (PBGOT). Highly unusual for a medical university, the PUM's engagement in this project became possible with a decision of its Vice-Chancellor, Professor Andrzej Ciechanowicz. So far we have managed to explore a few dozen sites and find more than 700 remains, of which more than 40 have been identified. Our work is still far from finished and many problems (also of a legal nature) are waiting to be solved. We promise to solve them persistently and not rest until we exhaust every possibility of finding the graves of the communist terror victims and identifying their remains.

Ladies and gentlemen, as we know, the date of the National Day of Remembrance for the Accursed Soldiers is not accidental. For on 1 March

1951 the communist murderers executed Colonel Łukasz Ciepliński and his six companions from the Fourth Main Directorate of the 'Freedom and Independence' Association (WiN). Originating directly from the Home Army (AK), the WiN was the largest post-war underground organisation and it fought for the ideals of the Polish Underground State (PPP) in the post-war reality. I believe that the WiN's importance in the post-war history of Poland was not the only reason for that choice. There is no doubt that the memory of Colonel Ciepliński's exceptional qualities was a major factor in that decision. While in prison he wrote many secret messages to his family, which survived due to one of his subordinates. I think that on this day and at this special moment we should hear words of Colonel Ciepliński. Awaiting execution in his death cell, in the dead of the Stalinist night, when everything seemed lost, he expressed his unwavering faith in the victory of his ideals:

*Pain breaks sleep, tears at the brain and strength,  
will futile dreams arise from the grave,  
Will the days of the dear idea arise strong  
will our sacrifice bear fruit  
I believe – they will, the dreams will rise, the son will replace the father  
I believe more than ever that Christ shall prevail, Poland shall regain  
independence, and the humiliated human dignity will be restored.*

Several weeks before his death Ciepliński wrote to his son in a similar vein:

“They shall take only my life. And it is not the most important. I am glad that I shall be murdered as a Catholic for my sacred faith, as a Pole for independent and prosperous Poland, and as a man for truth and justice. Now I believe more than ever before that the teaching of Christ shall prove victorious, that Poland shall regain her independence, and that the disgraced human dignity shall be restored. This is my conviction and my great joy. If you find my grave, you may carve these words on it.”

We shall find your grave, Colonel and we shall engrave your words on it – the words that have been long engraved in our hearts.

Ladies and gentlemen, Colonel Łukasz Ciepliński, Captain Witold Pilecki and other heroes of the Polish pro-independence underground set very

high standards of humanity and patriotism. We should aspire to these standards so that we too can one day repeat the simple words of Danuta Siedzik 'Inka' that we did what we should have.

*Łukasz Kamiński*



# FROM THE AUTHOR OR WHAT THIS BOOK IS ABOUT AND WHAT IT IS FOR

In July 2012 dozens of families of Polish heroes of World War II and the period immediately after the war saw a glimmer of new hope for finding the graves of their fathers, uncles, and grandfathers. For it was the beginning of the exhumations in the Ł section of the Powązki cemetery in Warsaw the purpose of which was to find and identify the victims of the communist court murders committed during 1948–1956 in the prison in the Mokotów quarter of Warsaw. Several months later three families became certain that their loved ones had been buried in the ‘soldiers’ field’. With time that number began to grow.

What do these people feel when they find their relatives’ remains after years of uncertainty? What did they feel during the past decades? How much effort do the specialists need to expend for the search to succeed? What does their everyday painstaking work consist of?

In this story the dark history of the Stalinist period intertwines with the knowledge of the state-of-the-art technology of genetic identification. The scientists’ professionalism contrasts with the emotions of the victims’ families – hope, tension, and painful memories. We go from the excavated section of the Powązki cemetery to the high-tech genetic laboratories in Szczecin and Cracow. We access the memory of the communist prisons, brutal investigations, and fatherless childhood only to look into the future where the research methods developed by the Polish scientists shall become an internationally followed model.

All this has one objective: to repay the debt to those who fought for a free and sovereign Poland. They paid the highest price for their dreams. This is why it is simply wrong to ask whether the search for their secret burial places and the expensive and time-consuming genetic identification make sense. If someone has any doubts – and I know that some do – he

should think that it is precisely due to the people whose remains we search for that today we can speak Polish instead of Russian in our country and that we keep our passports at home and not at the Citizens' Militia (MO) stations.

## THREE INSTITUTIONS, ONE OBJECTIVE OR THE PATH TO THE 'SOLDIERS' FIELD'

Late February 2014. Regina Litke hears the intercom in her flat in the Muranów quarter of Warsaw. She picks up the receiver and hears, “Andrzej Cisek, IPN.”

Two or three minutes pass before the IPN employee walks out of the lift and into the flat – probably the longest three minutes in her life. Her heart pounding, the 80-year-old lady expects that in a moment all doubts regarding her father’s death shall be ultimately dispelled. Indeed, she learns that Major Jan Czeredys was executed on 14 December 1948. His remains were found in the Powązki cemetery in the spring of 2013 and his identity was then confirmed through genetic tests. Cisek hands Ms. Regina an invitation to a ceremony at the Belweder Palace during which she will receive her father’s identification certificate.

So what Ms. Regina has suspected for over sixty years has finally been confirmed beyond any doubt.

“At the turn of November and December 1948, already after my father had been sentenced to death, my mother and I went to the prison on Rakowiecka Street to see him. Later it proved to be our only meeting for when we tried to see him again the guard in the duty-room said that there was no Jan Czeredys in the register. There was no information about what happened to him. We clung to the thought that he might have been deported to Siberia. Our hope had flickered until 1956 when a lot of Poles returned from the east. But even then for a long time we did not go to the civil registry office for a death certificate. When I finally did that in the late 1980s, the document stated that he had died on 15 December 1948. That date must have been taken out of the air,” recalls Regina Litke.

41 families have found themselves in a situation similar to that in which Jan Czeredys’ daughter was in February 2014. For this is the number of

heroes – soldiers of the armed anti-communist underground and pre-war officers – who have been identified at the Powązki ‘soldiers’ field’ (40 people) and in the garrison cemetery in Gdańsk (1 person). The number of the remains of the victims found in Powązki until October 2014 amounts to 198, with probably another 90 buried underneath the tombstones erected much later, in the 1980s.

The discovery and identification of the remains would have been impossible without the many months of work of the whole team of specialists – archivists, archaeologists, anthropologists, forensic medicine specialists, and geneticists, who represent very disparate scientific disciplines.

August 2011. The IPN and the Ministry of Justice organise the celebrations of the first European Day of Remembrance for Victims of the Totalitarian Regimes. Ministers of justice from the entire European Union and chairmen of the Polish IPN’s counterparts meet at the Warsaw Rising Museum.

“When I talked with my counterparts from Western Europe I was extremely surprised by their poor grasp of communist crimes,” recalls Krzysztof Kwiatkowski, the contemporary Minister of Justice and the present Supreme Audit Office Chairman, who participated in the celebrations. “For instance, my counterpart from the Spanish government, José Zapatero, had a totally different sensibility. For them the memory of World War II and the Spanish Civil War period immediately before it is predominantly about fascist crimes. Their sensibility is one-dimensional. Being a Pole, I showed them that in fact the events, which took place 60 years ago were not only German Nazi crimes, but also Soviet communist ones.”

The celebrations are attended not only by Krzysztof Kwiatkowski and IPN Chairman Doctor Łukasz Kamiński, but also by ROPWiM Secretary Doctor Andrzej Krzysztof Kunert. During a break between panels they talk about how the memory of the victims of totalitarian regimes is dotted with dozens of sites of tragedies, with the ‘soldiers’ field’ in Powązki being one of such unique places.

“We concluded that these three institutions – the IPN, ROPWiM, and the Ministry of Justice – could jointly undertake excavations, particularly in the ‘soldiers’ field’ in Warsaw,” says Kamiński. “We had to develop a legal formula of the agreement as each of these subjects operates under a different legal act. On 4 September Minister Kunert and I asked Professor Krzysztof Szwagrzyk to coordinate all of our exhumations in Poland. Obviously, he agreed.”

In 2011 Professor Krzysztof Szwaagrzyk of the Wrocław IPN branch office and a professor at the University of Lower Silesia had already had considerable experience in searching for graves of victims of communism and identifying the remains. During 2003–2008 the team he directed exhumed the remains of six heroes in the Osobowice Cemetery in Wrocław and in the Opole area, which were then identified by geneticists. In 2009 Szwaagrzyk participated in the search for burial sites of soldiers of the Combat Army Detachment (BOA) in the Central Cemetery in Szczecin and in October 2011 he again directed exhumations in Wrocław.

“During the works in the Osobowice cemetery Professor Szwaagrzyk proved that it is possible to identify larger groups and not only individuals,” stresses the IPN Chairman.

“Sections 81a and 120 of the Osobowice cemetery in Wrocław are the only burial sites of victims of communism in Poland, which had not been liquidated. All the others have been dug up and appropriated for new burials,” adds Krzysztof Szwaagrzyk. “We managed to find the remains of the 299 Wrocław prisoners executed in the 1940s and 1950s there. That was the origin of the team, which now carries out such works in the whole country. We wished to bring our experience to Warsaw to examine that unique site – the Ł section of the Powązki cemetery.”

### **Individuals whose remains were found in Wrocław and in the Opole area during 2003–2008**

<b>Name and surname</b>	<b>Exhumation place and year</b>
<b>Hieronim Bednarski</b> (1921–1953), AK and WiN soldier	Evangelical-Augsburg cemetery in Opole, 2006
<b>Mieczysław Bujak</b> (1926–1951), AK soldier	Osobowice cemetery in Wrocław, 2006
<b>Edward Cieśla</b> (1923–1952), AK soldier	Municipal cemetery in Opole-Półwieś, 2006
<b>Włodzimierz Pawłowski</b> (1911–1953), non-commissioned officer in the Polish Army, officer in the Peasants' Battalions	Osobowice cemetery in Wrocław, 2003
<b>Stefan Pólrul</b> (1926–1953), member of the 'Freedom' Polish Underground Organisation in the Navy	Osobowice cemetery in Wrocław, 2008
<b>Antoni Tomiałojć</b> (1923–1949), AK and WiN soldier	Osobowice cemetery in Wrocław, 2008

On 26 October 2011 the IPN and the ROPWiM issue a joint announcement which reads:

“Out of respect for the thousands of victims of the communist system who have been deprived of their graves for more than five decades the ROPWiM and the IPN have jointly undertaken to find all Polish burial places of soldiers of the AK, NSZ, WiN, KWP, and other pro-independence organisations who were political prisoners during 1944–1956. The first works carried out within the framework of this agreement are the exhumations in sections 81A and 120 of the Osobowice cemetery in Wrocław, as a result of which we are locating the burial places of and identifying over 350 prisoners who died or were executed in the prison on Kleczkowska Street in Wrocław.

The experience and effects of the works in Wrocław let us express our hope for a similar success in the nearest future possible of the search for the burial places of prisoners murdered in prisons in Warsaw, where we shall start working shortly, Białystok, Gdańsk, Katowice, Cracow, Lublin, Łódź, Poznań, Rzeszów, Szczecin, and other cities.”



ROPWiM Secretary Andrzej Kunert, IPN Chairman Łukasz Kamiński, and Minister of Justice Krzysztof Kwiatkowski sign the letter of intent regarding the excavation programme to locate unknown burial places of victims of the communist terror. The agreement is signed in the building of the gaol in the Warsaw quarter of Mokotów, that is, in the building of the prison where most of the victims had been executed. Warsaw, 10 November 2011 (photo by Piotr Życieński).

10 November 2011 marks the signing of the agreement between the IPN, ROPWiM, and the Ministry of Justice.

“Due to the momentous need to spread the knowledge in Polish society about the resistance against the forcibly imposed communist regime and the great sacrifice on the part of the Polish Nation during 1944–1956, [...] the Partners express their willingness to enter into cooperation and to act jointly for the purpose of discovering previously unknown burial places of victims of the communist terror during 1944–1956,” reads the preamble and the first paragraph of the letter of intent.

Krzysztof Szwagrzyk is appointed the IPN Chairman’s attorney for the search of previously unknown burial places of victims of the communist terror during 1944–1956.

The IPN becomes responsible for the search, the ROPWiM commemorates the victims found and finances the search efforts during the first couple of months, and the Ministry of Justice participates in the identification process (the Cracow Institute of Forensic Research also participates in the tests) and in the annulment of the sentences passed by the communist courts on the heroes. The Prison Service also proves helpful in many cases.

Krzysztof Kwiatkowski, the Minister of Justice during 2009–2011:

“Those sentences could have been annulled earlier but only families of the victims had a right to file for annulment in such cases. Yet after the fall of communism there were few living relatives who sought rehabilitation of the murdered. But the law gives such an initiative also to the minister of justice. Consequently, as the first minister of justice to do so, I filed about a thousand of such motions. The matter was very difficult. It required close cooperation with the IPN, particularly its investigation department. It was necessary to prove in each case that the charges – often laid as criminal – had been fabricated. The IPN performed painstaking work for the ministry as it examined such cases, which later facilitated the sentence annulment procedure. Group annulment proved impossible as the communists cleverly hid such cases among thousands of others – the courts martial also sentenced actual criminals, for instance, blackmailers (*szmalcownicy*). So we needed to find the sentences passed on the Unwavering Soldiers among the multitude of others. My first motion regarded Danuta Siedzik, the heroic ‘Inka’, whose burial place was discovered and confirmed in March 2015. I am happy that I was able to start that process of rehabilitation.”



**Regional courts martial** were established as per the organisational order of 20 January 1946 given by Marshal Michał Żymierski – the Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Army and the Minister of National Defence. They examined cases of functionaries of the public security apparatus, MO, Internal Security Corps (KBW), and other militarised formations as well as civilians falling into the jurisdiction of courts martial under special regulations. Those courts passed their sentences on the basis of executive orders characterised by unprecedented severity of punishments. Introduced on 23 September 1944 by a decree of the communist Polish Committee of National Liberation (PKWN), the criminal code of the Polish Army was a legal act particularly important for the functioning of the military courts martial. Chapter 17 of that decree regarded high treason, usually punishable by death. The regional courts martial operated until 1955.

How did the specialists know to look for remains of the heroes precisely in section Ł of Military Powązki? Of course, there are no official documents confirming that those executed were buried there. The communists not only did not intend to leave any traces of their crimes, but they wished to erase all memory of the heroes who fought for Polish independence. But at the turn of the 1950s and 1960s people began to hear through the grapevine that the political prisoners executed in the Mokotów prison during the Stalinist period had been dumped into pits dug up on the outskirts of the Powązki municipal cemetery.

“Mrs. Janeczka Staniewicz, the widow of Commodore Jerzy Staniewicz, began to receive information that our fathers might have been buried in municipal Powązki, in a fragment of a rubbish dump,” says Witold Mieszkowski, a son of Commodore Stanisław Mieszkowski, who was executed in the Mokotów prison in December 1952.

Similarly to Jan Czeredys’ family, the Mieszkowskis did not really believe that the death sentence had been carried out and for some time also lived in the hope that being a fine navy specialist (navy gunner) he had more likely been deported into the interior of Russia.

“When we slowly began to doubt that Father was alive we started to search for the possible burial places with new intensity,” recalls Witold Mieszkowski. “Similarly to other widows living in Warsaw, my mother also went to the ‘soldiers’ field’ during that period. I was more inclined to think that he had been buried in the birch coppices in Rembertów. Meanwhile the authorities made a proposal to our family and the families of the 19 executed higher rank officers to found their symbolic graves. Some of the widows agreed. But we were convinced that there should either be one tombstone for all the 19 officers executed within the framework of the cases related to the conspiracy in the army or there should be none. We did not want to accept individual tombstones. That was in the late 1950s. By then the widows had already begun to bring flowers to the ‘soldiers’ field’ and burn candles there. Every All Saints’ Day that site was purportedly more brightly lit with candles. Furthermore, earlier some learned in secret from the local gravediggers about night-time burials. Mrs. Maria Romer-Kędzierska and Mrs. Apolonia Leśnikowska with her daughter Marysia went there regularly during that period. But the information spreading through the grapevine seemed untrue to me. A rubbish dump? Nobody thought that the communists’ philosophy could have been so Asian!” Witold Mieszkowski still cannot believe it.

In the 1980s, during the martial law, the former rubbish dump and at the same time the secret burial site of the prison victims began to be appropriated to new burials. New tombstones of officers of the Polish Peoples’ Army – mostly engineers, physicians, and pharmacists – appeared in the ‘soldiers’ field’ along with those of military prosecutors, for instance, of Major Jerzy Wenelczyk, the murderer of Commodore Mieszkowski, and judges, including Lieutenant Colonel Roman Kryże, infamous for passing numerous death sentences (“Kryże in the docket, crosses in the cemetery,” as people used to say). Some of the remains buried during the 1940s and 1950s were covered over with an asphalt lane or new tombstones erected in memory of completely different people. The families of those buried there in the 1980s, or at least some of them, probably did not know the history of that part of Powązki.

“But the cemetery management must have been aware of it. Only that today the prosecutor surprisingly cannot establish who is responsible for enlarging the military cemetery by that municipal section. The ‘soldiers’ field’, which is a sacred place to us, is still... dead silent! But somebody

must have planned and laid it out. Somebody must have laid that asphalt lane over the remains of my father! Under cover of the martial law more and more tombstones were put up there to commemorate activists who had for years obediently served at the red mass. I am deeply convinced that those who covered up and hid the crime should be held responsible for complicity,” thinks Witold Mieszkowski.

In 1988 reporter Małgorzata Szejnert launched a journalist investigation regarding the secret burials of political prisoners during the Stalinist period. The leads brought her to two places: the new cemetery of the St Catherine parish on Wałbrzyska Street and the Ł section. She described the results of her investigation in her book *Śród żywych duchów* first published in 1990 by an immigrant publishing house (the censorship in Poland did not end until April 1990) and reissued by the ‘Znak’ publishing house in 2012. On the eve of the All Saints’ Day in 1988 Szejnert went to the ‘soldiers’ field’ and left requests for the victims’ families to contact her. She put those on a few symbolic graves, which as it later occurred had been made there since the late 1950s. She heard back, for instance, from Maria Leśnikowska, a daughter of Tadeusz Leśnikowski, an AK soldier executed in 1950. In 1959 Ms. Maria’s mother piled up some dirt in the ‘soldiers’ field’ where a local gravedigger told her Leśnikowski might have been buried.

November 1990 brought the laying of the cornerstone of a monument commemorating the heroes buried there. However, the location of the monument was still chosen on the basis of oral accounts. It remained uncertain whether that was the place where the heroes executed during the Stalinist period had been buried.

## THE SEARCH FROM THE INSIDE OR FROM ARCHIVES TO EXCAVATIONS

The critical moment for the launch of the works in the ‘soldiers’ field’ comes in 2012, when an aerial picture taken in the 1950s is discovered as early as during the search query in the Central Military Archive. The contemporary outskirts of municipal Powązki visible in this picture are dug up, which serves as an important confirmation of the oral accounts.

It is time for the next step: a ground-penetrating radar. Doctors Krzysztof Szwaagrzyk and Andrzej Ossowski, a geneticist at the PUM in Szczecin and a specialist in non-invasive ground survey, arrive at the ‘soldiers’ field’ on 15 March 2012. The ground-penetrating radar resembles a floor polisher or a mower.

“This device sends radio waves into the ground. Reflected by the individual layers, the waves then come back. Owing to the differences in the return time of the reflected waves we can create an image of what is under ground. The radar tells us whether the area has ever been dug up or not,” explains Andrzej Ossowski. “But this device cannot detect skeletons in the ground. As long as we do not conduct test excavations we cannot conclude whether anybody is buried here,” stresses the scientist.

Ossowski emphasises that it makes no sense to launch field works before an archive search.

“It is easier to spend months in the archives than years in the field,” he sums up.

The search query was conducted by Andrzej Cisek, a historian of the Office of Provision and Archive Management of IPN Documents. He is the one who prepares each victim’s dossier. With eagerness worthy of a detective he browses through tonnes of documents, not only those stored in the IPN, but also those kept, for example, in the Central Military Archive.

The field works commence on 23 July 2012. A team consisting of representatives of various fields – archaeologists, anthropologists, forensic

medicine specialists, and geneticists – arrives in the Powązki cemetery in Warsaw. The scientists come from various parts of Poland but mostly from Wrocław and Szczecin. The majority of them have already worked with Doctor Krzysztof Szwagrzyk.

“The method we developed in Wrocław has proved effective. We all work for our joint success. What counts is knowledge, experience, conscientiousness, and, most of all, the quality of the work performed. Unfortunately, imperfection of any of these elements lowers the probability of the final success. A mistake of an archaeologist, medic, or historian affects the final result. In order to avoid this we tried to select those who guarantee this high quality,” stresses Professor Szwagrzyk.

Archaeologists constitute the initial link in the chain of specialists working in the field. Their first duty is to supervise the operation of the excavator, which makes a wide plane excavation. While the machine is removing the soil the specialists are looking for grey spots. If they appear, it will mean that a hole was once dug there and then covered up. In such case the excavator shall stop working so as not to disturb the bones.

The digging up to the first grey spots in the ‘soldiers’ field’ in Powązki takes longer than the crew has expected. The reason is that in the late 1950s a metre and a half of rubble was brought to the Ł section to level up the ground. Unfortunately, the first day of the search brings no result. The situation changes on the second day, when the team uses spades as the heavy machinery could disrupt the bone structure. When the archaeologists notice a skeleton they carefully uncover it with brushes and skewers. Wrong are those who think that this activity resembles the light brushing off of dry sand, as sometimes seen in films. For in reality the soil is wet and packed.

The cleaned skeletons are then documented with a photograph and an archaeological report. The specialists write, for instance, “We can see a human skeleton, which appears complete. The bones are not situated anatomically – the arms are twisted in the elbows. The body was dumped onto its back.” The skeletons also need to be measured and described in terms of their orientation towards the cardinal directions of the compass. Only then can a skeleton be removed from the pit. Every bone must be carefully cleaned with brushes. The archaeologists must wear gloves, first of all, for their own hygiene and secondly to prevent the cleaner’s DNA from contaminating the bones, which are to be tested. But this is not the end of



Archaeologist uncovering a skeleton (photo by Piotr Życieński).



Documentation of a skeleton uncovered in pit 1. After genetic tests we know that they belonged to Edmund Bukowski (photo by Piotr Życieński).



the archaeologists' work for they must dig until they see a layer which has never been dug.

In the 'soldiers' field' it rarely happens that a skeleton discovered in one pit proves to be the only one there. The next days show that most of the discovered pits are mass graves. With the team looking for remains of specific individuals and not for mass graves, anthropologists step in to help the archaeologists lift the remains.

"Our task is to separate the individual skeletons in such a way that everybody remains themselves. We also establish the age and sex of the discovered individuals and the characteristic features, which might facilitate identification," says Katarzyna Kuźniarska, an anthropologist from Wrocław.



The archaeologists' and anthropologists' painstaking work: the lifting of remains down to the tiniest bones (photo by Piotr Zycieński).



Separating the skeletons is a difficult task. In the ‘soldiers’ field’ two, usually three, and sometimes even eight or nine bodies were thrown into the pits and, making matters worse, without caskets. The bodies lie as they fell in: on the back, facing the ground, or alternatively, meaning that one person’s feet are where the other person’s head is and vice versa. An experienced anthropologist can describe the layout of the remains or differentiate individual skeleton even in mass graves. One method facilitating the matching of bones to the individuals is to use different colours of tape.

“The bodies were thrown in alternatively to fit as many as possible in one hole,” comments Natalia Szymczak, an archaeologist from Warsaw.

She is shocked by a burial pit with an arm sticking out high above the rest of the skeleton.

“If one has any idea about the anatomical position, one can see that that body was simply squeezed in. This looks as if that person was trying to get out. Those who dug the holes did not know how many bodies to prepare them for. This is why we have seen pits theoretically prepared for one person into which more bodies were dumped. If there was not enough space, the bodies were pushed and squeezed in by force.”

It also happened that the grave diggers dumped three bodies at first, covered them up with soil, and after some time three more bodies were thrown in on top.

In such cases the bones of the individual people became mixed up to a large extent. It is particularly difficult to discern the tiny wrist bones or phalanges. So when in doubt, Kasia and Natalia consult the rest of the team.

“Some situations prove very difficult and require utmost professionalism,” stresses Katarzyna Kuźniarska.

Once the specialists establish to which skeleton the individual bones belong (beginning with the skull), the anthropologists fill in a report describing the layout of the remains and their sex and age. They then lift the carefully cleaned fragments of the skeleton plus any personal belongings found and put them in wooden boxes, each marked with the pit and remains number.

The bones can now be sent to the forensic medicine specialists. A tireless duo is working at a wide table in a tent: Doctor Łukasz Szleszkowski, a physician, and Agata Thannhäuser, a forensic anthropologist. The two specialists normally work together in the Forensic Medicine Institute in Wrocław. They communicate almost without words.



“Without skull reconstruction an attempt to estimate the injury resembles reading tea leaves,” says Łukasz Szleszkowski (photo by Piotr Zycieński).

“When we fall into our rhythm we work as if in a factory,” laughs Łukasz. Everybody knows what to do. There are no unnecessary movements.”

The forensic medicine and anthropology specialists are to determine the cause of death of the person to whom the examined skeleton belonged. They also determine the age, sex, height, and the individual identifying features, such as dentition. The bones first must be laid out on the table in the anatomical order. Agata takes every bone, examines it, and puts it in the right place. Skull fragments have to be stuck back together.

“Without it an attempt to estimate the injury resembles reading tea leaves,” says Doctor Szleszkowski.

Łukasz blows off the remaining dust on the bones with a rubber bulb. He re-examines the skeleton with Agata.

“We determine the age, sex, and height through examination of the bone remains. The individual features, which aid pre-genetic identification are very important,” explains the forensic anthropologist.

The forensic medicine and anthropology specialists often help the archaeologists and anthropologists match the bones found in mass graves to the individual skeletons. If the bones are very mixed up, separation of the remains is almost impossible.

“Some can be matched on the basis of their appearance – one person’s bones are longer, another person’s shorter. Once there were three bodies in one grave and most of the bones were separated at once, but the bones of the feet were mixed up. We received a small sack with the feet bones of the three individuals. It so happened that one person was tall and slender, the second stocky and chunky, and the third had an average built. Consequently, the matching was relatively easy. But if the people whose remains we lift at the same time had a similar built, then the unmatched bones can be marked only with the burial pit number,” explains the scientist. “The samples for genetic testing are taken only from the bones, which undoubtedly belong to the given skeleton. It is only through genetic tests that we can identify the person by name and surname, but that stage is preceded by identification typing on the basis of the examination of the remains. We cannot risk guessing. The same applies to our everyday duties, for we work for the police, public prosecution service, and courts. We are bound by specific procedures and discipline in our inference. We cannot make loose hypotheses regarding, for instance, the cause of death. We must adhere to facts and have our feet firmly on the ground. For somebody could be sentenced on the basis of our presumptions. So when in doubt about who the given bones (usually tiny) belong to, we do not assign them,” stresses Szleszkowski.

The results of the examination are included in the forensic-medical report.

“Such a report looks exactly the same as reports on contemporary remains. It must be drafted rigorously, for it might later serve as evidence in a criminal case,” stresses Thannhäuser.

During writing of such a document concentration is essential.

“One mistake might result in a failure of identification,” explains Agata.

This is why Agata and Łukasz check each other’s work. They even prefer to stay longer, wait until the rest of the team leaves, and work some more in peace. Sometimes they stay at Powązki until as late as nine or ten o’clock. They compare each report with the photograph of the bones laid out on the table to make sure that every element has been described. At this stage they sometimes experience moments of horror when they begin to

doubt their own competence. How is it possible? They have described the dentition and taken a picture, the geneticists have taken samples for tests, and the remains are already in caskets, when the dentition description suddenly proves totally dissimilar to the photograph!

“A mistake might happen, but not by as many as five teeth,” wonders the surprised and distressed Agata. They launch a private internal investigation. After a consultation with the geneticists it turns out that it is the geneticists’ ‘fault’ as they have taken the teeth to take DNA samples. Whew...

Exhausted, Agata and Łukasz return to the hotel, where they can finally change from their overalls into normal clothes, but it is still not the time to rest.

“We agreed not to finish work until we finalise processing the data. As long as we have not finished something we would never return to Wrocław and leave these reports for later. Obviously, we have plenty of duties in our everyday work. This is why we conclude everything on the spot to then be able to use this data in our scientific work,” emphasises Agata.

In the hotel they arrange the documentation: they make two backup copies of the pictures and order the reports. God forbid, something goes missing! Now they only need to check whether they have the adhesive for gluing the skulls tomorrow. There is none left, so they rush off to a shop. Only when everything is ready for the next day can they calmly go to sleep.

To identify the remains beyond any doubt the geneticists require comparative DNA samples from the families. The relatives who live in Warsaw take advantage of the fact that the team is in the capital and visit the ‘soldiers’ field’. First, they go to doctors Łukasz Szleszkowski and Andrzej Ossowski, forensic geneticist and the PUM Vice-Chancellor’s attorney for the PBGOT since 28 September 2012.

“The victims’ relatives treat us as physicians, even though only Łukasz is one,” laughs Andrzej Ossowski.

Both doctors fill in questionnaires, which indeed resemble medical interviews. The families are asked about the victims’ features possibly visible on the skeleton, such as height, age, missing teeth, and surgeries. As for the donors, the scientists ask about recent organ transplants and blood transfusions.

“Due to such procedures the tested DNA samples could show a mixed genetic profiles,” explains Ossowski. “At the same time we try to collect as



Łukasz Szleszkowski and Andrzej Ossowski obtain comparative DNA samples from the victims' relatives at the Powązki Cemetery (photo by Piotr Życieński).

little sensitive data as possible. We ask only about what is indispensable to the identification,” he stresses.

Collecting buccal swabs is extremely easy and takes just about a dozen seconds: a donor takes a swab, rubs it on the inside of his cheek, and puts it into a container. The relative receives the kit from the team. It has to be sealed so that the DNA sample does not become contaminated by somebody else's DNA. For the same reason it is best when the relative takes his own sample without anybody's interference. The kits are often sent to the families with instructions on how to collect the sample.

“This method has proved effective. Nobody has ever sent back contaminated material,” says Ossowski.

As most of the victims whose remains are sought for in the ‘soldiers’ field’ are men, a rumour started going round that genetic samples for com-

parative tests obtained from sons and grandsons are better, meaning that they guarantee more certainty, than those taken from daughters and granddaughters.

“It is a myth,” denies Andrzej Ossowski. “If a male victim left two offspring: a son and a daughter, we obtain samples from both of them. The difference is that when we have the son’s sample we can also examine the Y chromosome, so some might think that the DNA of a male descendant is better. But it is not true – if there is a son and a daughter we must test the DNA samples obtained from both of them,” he explains.

“The matter becomes more complicated with more distant relatives, for instance, if the victim had a brother and that brother had a grandson. In such a case the DNA of the granddaughter of that brother would indeed be useless contrary to that of the grandson, for he has the same Y chromosome, on the basis of which we can type that person,” he clarifies.

But he stresses that in the said case it is still very difficult to confirm the kinship for the bio-statistical computer program shows an insufficient level of probability after such a comparison.

“We have a few such people in our database: we suspect who they are but we are still seeking comparative material. It might end in exhumation of their parents, as in the case of Hieronim Dekutowski ‘Zapora’,” adds Ossowski.

The exhumation of Hieronim Dekutowski’s parents was necessary precisely because the genetic samples were obtained only from his nieces and their children. Such kinship proved insufficient to confirm the victim’s identity. But the genetic database employees did not expect that they would be able to access the grave of Dekutowski’s parents.

“Ms. Milena Bykowska of the PBGOT called me and asked for permission to exhume my grandmother, who was Dekutowski’s sister. I agreed and I told her about the grave of his parents. The whole family decided to agree to their exhumation,” reports Grażyna Chojecka, a daughter of Dekutowski’s niece.

The efforts to obtain the DNA sample to compare with that of Zygmunt Szendzielarz ‘Łupaszka’ had a dramatic course. It really was a race against time. Szendzielarz’s daughter, Barbara Szendzielarz, died on 30 March 2012 and her planned cremation would have rendered obtainment of her DNA sample impossible. Making matters worse, there was nobody in Warsaw to collect it.

“In two hours we decided to drive for that sample on the next day,” reports Agata Thannhäuser. The driver was her colleague, an archaeologist. He accompanied Agata not only during the journey, but also went with her into the room where the bodies were kept.

“Obtaining a sample for DNA testing from a dead body is something I have become accustomed to. Besides, it is not particularly complicated. But my colleague, who is not accustomed to such activities stood pale by the wall the whole time,” recalls the forensic anthropologist.

“When about twelve months later ‘Łupaszka’ was identified I thought to myself that he was ‘my’ hero, even though, of course, it was a success of the whole team. I waited for his identification the most,” she admits.

A lot of relatives of the victims, for instance, Grażyna Chojecka, volunteered to give samples. If they did not, the IPN archive employees come to assist. Andrzej Cisek, an IPN historian, participated in the search for the families for many months. The information he obtained also served as a starting point for the search. For instance, once he learned that the mother of a victim executed on Rakowiecka Street had remarried. Following the trace of her second husband’s surname he managed to reach the victim’s step siblings. It is always a good idea to browse the Internet. Sometimes a relative has, for instance, his own company and then it is possible to find his contact details online. Old telephone books also prove useful.

Every surname found goes to Joanna Piskorz, the director of the Operations Bureau of the Office for Provision and Archiving of IPN Documents, who searches for them in the PESEL database.

“This is the most interesting task I have ever undertaken. I often stay after hours to exhaust the possibilities of finding a given person. I am aware that the identification’s success might depend on my work,” says Joanna Piskorz.

Based on the information archivists have found in documents, she enters the name and surname of the victim, the names of his parents, and his mother’s maiden name into the database. The less popular the name and surname of the victim, the greater the chance for success. If the name and surname are popular in Poland, she has to check each of the several dozen hits.

“If the victims’ parents or siblings died before the launch of the PESEL system, that is, before 1979, we are unlikely to find their data,” stresses Piskorz. In such cases she uses the publically available genealogical websites. Sometimes while searching the PESEL database she finds siblings



not mentioned in the archival materials. It also happened that one of the hits was an address where more than a hundred people were registered. “I checked and it turned out to be an old people’s home. Every such a piece of information facilitates contacting the person we are looking for,” says Piskorz.

Milena Bykowska, PBGOT historian, responsible for contact with families:

“If we have a telephone number, we call the victims’ families before sending the sampling kit. We do this because some of the families are worried about how the genetic material is going to be used in the future. The opponents of the tests claim that the families’ DNA samples could be ‘improperly’ used in the future. The telephone conversations that precede the sending of the DNA sampling kits are to explain to the relatives what the whole process is about and they enable them to understand that our tests shall never be used against them in any way. Their only purpose is to identify the victims of communism. The public announcement of the successful identification of some of the victims encouraged the other families.”

Bykowska gives assurances that all the data are carefully protected.

“No unauthorised individual can obtain the personal data of the victims’ relatives. Even if somebody broke into our building (which is impossible, by the way), he would not know who each genetic profile belongs to, for they are marked with numbers instead of names and surnames. Only the person authorised by the lab director knows which profile connects with a given victim. The geneticists do not know who they are testing. The samples are marked with individual numbers. If we wish to put it all together we must cooperate closely.”

“First and foremost, the genetic profiles we establish say nothing about the person they belong to, their appearance, or diseases. They are like a genetic thumbprint and nothing more,” adds Andrzej Ossowski.

Milena Bykowska:

“The families we manage to contact have very high expectations. They often call me after a month or two after the sampling and ask whether the identification has been successful. In such cases we always reply that the tests take many months and we ask for patience. I always appeal to the families to psychically prepare for a failure of the identification for it is better to be positively surprised than disappointed.”

Andrzej Ossowski:

“Genetic typing is highly effective. It gives us almost absolute certainty that the given remains belong to the given individual. But for as long as the biostatic program does not confirm the identity we cannot regard the genetic tests as completed. We must not risk announcing incorrect results,” he stresses.

But before the genetic tests stage the anthropologists and forensic medicine specialists give a preliminary opinion as to who the given bones might belong to. As we have said, it is done on the basis of the skull shape, height, and other characteristic features. This information is taken from the documentation found by Andrzej Cisek.

The historian stresses the importance of information about dentition and height, which might prove very helpful in the preliminary identity typing. Other important information regards any missing extremities or gunshot wounds. Normally every complete file of a prisoner includes his physical description.

Agata Thannhäuser:

“As I was directly involved in the obtainment of the comparative DNA samples for Szendzielarz’s identification at some point I realised that while examining almost every other skull I typed it for my private use as belonging to ‘Łupaszka’.”

Andrzej Ossowski:

“It very often happens that the identity established using classic anthropological methods proves incorrect after genetic tests. It is a norm. And this also shows that without genetics identification would be impossible.”

Lukasz Szleszkowski:

“We tried to determine the burials’ sequence but we managed to find chronological burials only on short distances. Most of the prisoners were buried completely at random. Identification of individuals in mass graves always proves the most difficult. But with the lack of any chronology in the digging of the graves it has proved to be a facilitation. After analysing the execution dates we knew, for instance, that eight people were executed on the same day. It was relatively safe to assume that their bodies were thrown into one burial pit. This was precisely the case with the grave of Dekutowski and his subordinates – seven people were executed and buried on the same day and another body was thrown in the next day.”

We need to bear in mind that even though the documents confirm that the given person was executed, give the time of death, down to the hour, and state that 'the body was buried', they do not, however, specify where. For the burials of the victims from the prison on Rakowiecka Street were not registered anywhere.

# FROM SAMPLE TO PROFILE OR AT THE LABORATORY OF THE POLISH GENETIC DATABASE OF VICTIMS OF TOTALITARIAN REGIMES

The biological material obtained in the ‘soldiers’ field’ are then frozen and marked. The freezer is one of the most common appliances found at the Szczecin laboratory.

Andrzej Ossowski:

“The material obtained from the victims – bones and teeth – and the comparative material are stored at -40 degrees Celsius. All the material is in airtight zipper storage bags and boxes so that it does not dry up. If it did, the material might undergo sublimation, that is, change its state from solid into gas.

The fridges also store the chemicals for the genetic tests.

“This is the most expensive soup in the world,” laughs Doctor Ossowski, showing a tiny vial with few millilitres of liquid.

When he says how much this ‘soup’ costs, the thought of spilling the vial’s contents no longer sounds funny, as one set of a few vials is worth approx. 20,000 zlotys.

“Such a set enables us to make about a hundred markings. Sometimes we use up one to analyse the material taken from just one or two individuals. And a DNA analysis requires various sets,” explains Andrzej Ossowski.

The markers used in forensic medicine are validated, that is, they have all the necessary certificates. The scientists from the PBGOT cannot produce their own markers for then the results of the tests they carry out would not be recognised by the public prosecution service or courts.



Andrzej Ossowski shows a vial with a substance necessary for genetic identification. The price of this tiny vial is several thousand zlotys (photo by Karolina Wichowska).

“Besides, even though we use state-of-the-art equipment, we do not have any to produce markers, which would work sufficiently well on material as difficult to test as this damaged one,” adds Ossowski.

The material is frozen both as a whole (for instance, a whole tooth or a bone) and in the form of bone powder. The latter is made by geneticist Marta Kuś. She prepares a special jigsaw the scientists use to cut the bones and sterilizes the equipment with UV rays. Of course, Marta is wearing a mask and gloves so as not to contaminate the material and to protect herself from the fungi and bacteria, which might be on the bones.

“If you want to photograph me at work make sure that there are no bones visible in the picture. We rigidly adhere to the principle of treating human remains with respect,” she emphasises.

The geneticist now must mechanically clean the cut out piece of bone with a mini milling machine. Polishing the bone, Marta keeps her hands in a laminar flow cabinet, with laminar flow of sterile air, previously exposed to UV rays.

The mechanically cleansed fragment now must undergo chemical cleaning. Marta puts it in a test tube with sodium hypochlorite solution which then rotates in a special vortex mixer for quite some time, usually a less than an hour. The bone then must be rinsed in distilled water and sterilised with UV rays. After all these procedures the material can go into the cryogenic grinder. The container of this high-grade steel device resembles a giant salt cellar.

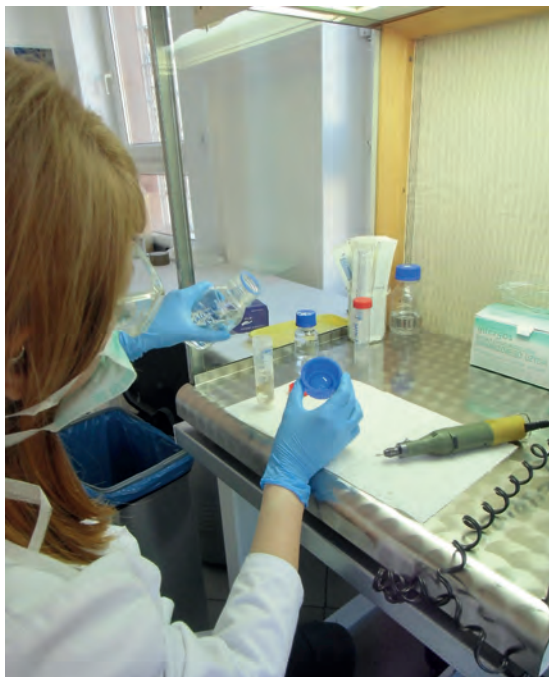
“Unfortunately, it is much more expensive, as it costs approx. five hundred dollars, while it wears out after grinding the maximum of approx. ten samples,” says Andrzej Ossowski.

This is due to the extremely low temperature of liquid nitrogen (-196 degrees Celsius), in which the bones are grinded. Why such a low temperature?

“To prevent the bones from burning,” explains Doctor Ossowski.

Without cooling it would be probable for the pestle, which powders the bones strikes 15,000 times a minute. The banging resembles the sound of a hammer hitting a steel pane.

“The identifications conducted within the framework of the search for the communist terror victims exhumed in the ‘soldiers’ field’ constitute a real testing ground for our equipment. Nobody has ever used it to carry out tests on such a large scale as this. At some point the grinder simply began to burn. With this pace of work we can see how many tests this equipment can handle,” says Andrzej Ossowski.



The mechanically cleansed fragment now has to undergo chemical cleansing (photo by Karolina Wichowska).



Grinding the bones in liquid nitrogen protects the material from burning (photo by Marta Kuś).

Next, the bone powder goes into a device that isolates genetic material. There are two such methods: using the first one a laboratory assistant isolates the material manually, while the other machine does it automatically.

“Automatic isolation makes it possible to eliminate human error,” emphasises the geneticist.

The machine then examines the DNA quality, focusing on whether there are any factors, which could inhibit the amplification of the DNA strands. If there are, the isolation process must be repeated in order to eliminate them. Sometimes this process has to be repeated a few dozen times, and in extreme cases even a few hundred. For instance, the Szczecin team worked almost a year on the material obtained from Dekutowski.

“This is the heart of our laboratory,” Andrzej Ossowski shows a machine, which from the side looks slightly like a big printer for a personal computer, but with a place for test tubes behind the glass front. Next to the glass is a control panel. This is a PCR machine to amplify DNA strands.

“This machine is like a complicated oven combined with a fridge,” explains Ossowski. “The material is first cooled and then heated to approx.



95 degrees Celsius. After one cycle we have two DNA strands, after two – four, and after 36 – millions. This method has revolutionised genetics and has greatly facilitated our work.”

A PCR reaction takes about five hours, which in genetics is relatively short.



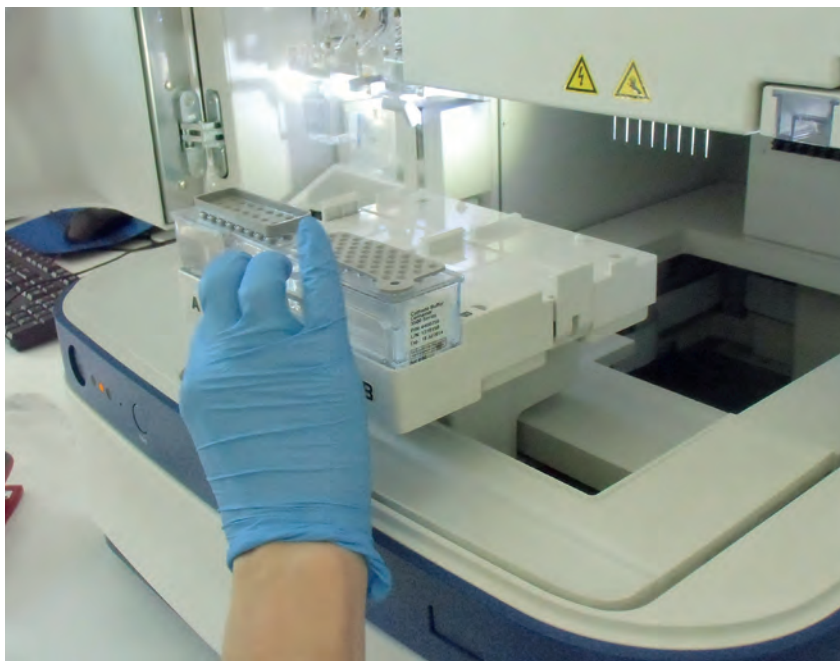
A PCR machine to amplify DNA strands (photo by Karolina Wichowska)

The DNA then goes into another machine – a genetic analyser. At this stage it is possible to assess whether the genetic profile had been established. The analyser is connected to a computer with a bio-statistical program, which calculates the probability of kinship with comparative genetic profiles obtained in the same manner. The machine resembles a cabinet with glass doors. Inside is a stand with a few rows of holes for capillary tubes, some of which contain DNA samples and the others contain chemicals. Every capillary tube (a very thin tube) with the substance sucks up one sample.

“The DNA fragments move in the electromagnetic field into the capillaries, where they are exposed to a laser and read by a video camera. They

then go to the buffer, that is, another type of chemical substance,” explains Andrzej Ossowski. “Once we have the profiles we describe them. A profile consists of DNA markers. It does not tell us anything about the individual. It is like a genetic thumbprint,” he repeats.

On the screen of the computer plugged into the genetic analyser we can see curves – parallel lines, which form spikes at certain intervals. To a layman they might seem like brain waves. Their interpretation is the responsibility of Doctor Grażyna Zielińska, a geneticist.



After the amplification reaction the genetic material is put with reagents in a genetic analyser (photo by Karolina Wichowska).

“We compare individual alleles, that is, elements of the genotype. We look for common features in the person we are identifying and the person or people who donated the comparative material. For the closer the kinship, the more shared features,” explains Doctor Zielińska. “If the comparative material was taken from the son, daughter, or the parents, the matter is relatively simple, but it might become more complicated when the compar-

ative material donor is, for instance, a sister or a brother. The more distant the kinship, the more difficult the identification. In such cases it becomes necessary to broaden the tests by additional genetic markers. Such an identification process might continue up to a few months.”

Andrzej Ossowski stresses that when laboratory assistants perform paternity tests by court order or even to try to identify a victim of a plane crash with a known list of casualties (list of passengers), they usually use one set of markers for every individual. In the case of the identification of the remains from the ‘soldiers’ field’ the scientists need a lot of diverse sets of markers, for the kinship with the comparative material donors is often very distant. Furthermore, the list of victims is open – we do not know exactly how many people were executed or who they were.

“In order to identify one individual we sometimes need to conduct two or three hundred lab processes. One stage takes about a week. So we need to multiply a week of work of six or seven people by two or three hundred to imagine how much input this task requires. Other professionals are amazed that we have managed to identify as many as 41 people in three years,” stresses the geneticist.

This makes the sporadic accusations that the tests take too long all the more unpleasant. For the pace of work is dizzying.

Ossowski’s team abides by one rule with particularly fierce determination: it never announces that somebody has been found before the results of the genetic tests.

“Of course, we do the typing also on the basis of knowledge from other fields that constitute our project. For example, we know that one day eight people were executed. If we have a grave with eight bodies, we may suspect that these are those executed on that day. There are also the anthropological elements such as whether somebody was very tall, very short, or had characteristic dentition. Once we conclude the first genetic identification it serves as a starting point for further search. For instance, if we find and identify two commodores, it is probable that the third person from the same grave was a Commodore too. But we cannot announce it before confirmation. We can only proceed on the basis of evidence,” says Ossowski.

The Szczecin genetic database was begun in 2009, with the start of the exhumation of the soldiers of the Combat Detachment of the Army (BOA) in the Central cemetery in Szczecin.

**Combat Army Detachment (BOA)** – a sabotage group of soldiers from the Wołkowysk AK Area in the Grodno region formed in December 1944 under the command of Stefan Pabiś ‘Stefan’. Active against the NKVD but also oriented towards aiding AK soldiers’ families in a difficult financial situation. After the end of WWII BOA soldiers did not lay down their weapons. They managed to move from the territories appropriated by the Soviets to the Polish side of the post-Yalta border and began to operate in Koszalin and then in Bobolice and the neighbouring localities. They created an intelligence network, also among State Security (UB ) and People’s Militia (MO) functionaries. At the turn of 1945 and 1946 the detachment had 21 members and 15 collaborators. It fought against the NKVD and the Polish communist repression apparatus and closely cooperated with the detachments commanded by Zygmunt Szendzielarz ‘Łupaszka’. Its commander established contact with the WiN leadership. In May 1946 state security and KBW functionaries conducted an operation against the BOA, which led to the apprehension of Stanisław Mincewicz ‘Sówka’, who in the end was sentenced to death and executed, with four people who cooperated with the detachment. Warned in advance, the other soldiers managed to avoid arrest. After that operation some of the soldiers, led by Pabiś, moved to Malbork, where they opened a craftsmanship cooperative while remaining in the WiN structures. Commanded by Wacław Kasprzyński a.k.a Borodziuk ‘Orzeł’ and Edward Kokotka ‘Wrzos’, the others continued their activity in Western Pomerania. In 1948 most BOA soldiers were arrested. On 21 August 1948 the Szczecin Regional Court Martial sentenced Wacław Kasprzyński a.k.a. Borodziuk, Edward Kokotka, Zenon Łozicki, Waldemar Klimczewski, and Edward Kozieradzki to death. Of the remaining BOA members and collaborators 2 people were sentenced to life imprisonment and 32 received prison sentences of 1 to 15 years.

On the basis of an article by Doctor Paweł Skubisz (Public Education Office of the Szczecin IPN Branch Office),  
[www.pomorze1945.pl](http://www.pomorze1945.pl)

“We knew that six BOA soldiers were buried in our cemetery. They had been sentenced and executed as a result of a trial in 1948,” says Doctor Marcin Stefaniak, the IPN chairman’s attorney for cooperation with the PBGOT and the initiator of the exhumation in the Central cemetery.

A lot of soldiers were identified using classic anthropologist methods due to the surviving cemetery documentation of grave location. Nevertheless, a decision was made to collect DNA samples.

That task was assigned to the PUM team led by Doctor Andrzej Ossowski, which already had experience in identifying victims of major catastrophes – first time in 2008 after the CASA airplane crash (20 victims) and then after the fire in Kamień Pomorski (23 victims). In both of those cases the team needed to create small genetic databases. Moreover, in 2006 it managed to identify the skull of one of the Katyn Massacre victims, Captain Ludwik Szymański, as well as find approx. ten thousand WWII victims and identify about a thousand of them.

“We had a problem with the BOA soldiers because actually we had basically no comparative material. We then concluded that it would be beneficial to create an all-Polish database, useful for the next tests of this type undertaken in 5, 10, or 50 years,” says Andrzej Ossowski.

The breakthrough day in the history of the Szczecin team was 28 September 2012, when the IPN chairman, Doctor Łukasz Kamiński, and the PUM Vice-Chancellor, Professor Andrzej Ciechanowicz, signed an agreement regarding the establishment of the Polish Genetic Database of Victims of Totalitarian Regimes (PBGOT). As the preamble reads, they did that “for the sake of the memory of victims of totalitarian regimes and to reduce their striking namelessness, which was one of the ways in which they were denied their humanity.”

“Not only physicians are shocked by the mass numbers, the namelessness, and the horrifying sight of the remains of the unidentified victims thrown into the burial pits. One of the manifestations of the European civilisation is respect for human corpses. When students take their oath they vow not only to have the utmost respect for human life, but also to respect human remains. This respect is inculcated in students, not only of medicine, from the very beginning,” stresses Professor Ciechanowicz.

He also points out that in the 18<sup>th</sup> century above the entrance to a *theatrum anatomicum* there was still the following inscription: *Hic est locus, ubi mortui vivos docent* – here the dead teach the living.

“We treat our participation in this venture as a realisation of the scientific mission of our university. John Ruskin said that science was about substituting a vision with facts, and sensations with evidence. We are providing material evidence,” he adds.

On the occasion of the signing of the agreement the Polish President Bronisław Komorowski sent a letter in which he expressed his gratitude to the IPN, PUM, and all scientists for their engagement in the search for the victims of the communist crimes:

“The nameless graves are an unhealed scar on our heroic nation. [...] The cemeteries and the places of memory are an inseparable part of the Polish landscape, an emphatic testimony to our difficult history, and at the same time A monument to freedom regained. It is our generation’s great obligation to preserve the memory of victims of totalitarian crimes. I re-



“I shall never forget this sight of the excavated graves, which hide so many tragedies and which due to your work are becoming a historical document,” wrote President Bronisław Komorowski in his letter to those engaged in the search for victims of communism. Bronisław Komorowski visiting specialists during their work in Powązki, standing next to him are: Krzysztof Szwagrzyk, Andrzej Kunert, and Łukasz Kamiński; Warsaw, 17 August 2012 (photo by Piotr Życieński).

gard the establishment of the Polish database of such victims' genetic profiles as extremely important. I consider it our duty to the victims and our obligation to the next generations. I was able to see your conscientious work in Powązki in Warsaw. [...] I shall never forget this sight of the excavated graves, which hide so many tragedies and which due to your work are becoming a historical document. Moved and grateful, I assure you that I have great respect for your project and I shall eagerly support it."

"During the identification of the remains found in the 'soldiers' field' it happened twice that we obtained the comparative genetic material already after the death of the victims' families. That showed us that we have little time to obtain such material from the living," says Professor Andrzej Ciechanowicz.

The identification conducted on the basis of the material collected in the PBGOT is the first such operation in the world in which the victims are being identified so long after their death.

"The identification of, for instances, the victims of the Srebrenica Massacre is in progress now. 20 years have passed since that crime. It is quite a long time, but in the case of our tests the interval is three times longer!", stresses Professor Ciechanowicz. "Relatives of the Srebrenica victims usually still live in the Balkans. By contrast, some siblings of our victims are still alive, and much more often their children, but it is the last moment to obtain their genetic material."



## PUBLICATIONS FOR SCIENTISTS OR POLISH HISTORY AS AN EXPORT PRODUCT

The uniqueness of the project has drawn the attention of scientists from abroad. The team was joined, for instance, by Professor Marek Jasiński, a Polish archaeologist who works at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim.

“Mr. Jasiński serves as an ambassador of our project in the research carried out in the EU. At the moment there are talks which, as I hope, shall end in the establishment of a European consortium focused precisely on the interdisciplinary aspect of our project. A contest for this consortium has already been announced within the framework of the UE budget for 2014–2020,” reveals the PUM Vice-Chancellor. “The project is to consist in a multifaceted approach to victims of repressions, conflicts, and civil wars in Europe. Outside Poland, the field works are being planned in Greece and Spain. The consortium shall probably include a representation of Cambridge University, the Netherlands Institute for Applied Scientific Research and the university in Trondheim,” adds Ciechanowicz.

“The interest in our project abroad is enormous, perhaps even greater than in Poland,” confirms Andrzej Ossowski. “In February 2014 I was in Cambridge at a meeting of scientists dealing with the European cultural heritage, including the memory of victims of totalitarian regimes. They were mostly interested in the technology we use to identify the victims. We received plenty of invitations to various conferences devoted to genetic identification, of course, not only of victims of totalitarian regimes, but also of mass catastrophes. Not a day passes without me receiving five or six e-mails from abroad with inquiries about our project,” says Ossowski. He also points out one other issue connected with it: “I laugh that by transferring the latest technologies we popularise our history and talk about it abroad. This is the best thing we can do. Even if we wrote a thousand pub-

lications on the anti-communist underground or totalitarian regimes, they would only be read by us. Of course, the Polish society also needs such information, but the awareness of our colleagues in Europe and the USA shall not change as a result of books we publish here in Polish. But when we talk about the victim identification technologies we necessarily must provide some historical background. And then, for instance, readers of *Forensic Science International*, the most popular periodical devoted to forensic medicine, learn about Polish history. My colleagues in Cambridge are reading another publication that we are preparing for a programme, which presents totalitarian crimes. Thus they are learning about the communist crimes. They have heard something about them – they are scientists after all, but they have never realised the scale and manner of them. We did not expect that this would happen, but it is very good that it did,” states the geneticist.

Ossowski mentions an international conference of archaeologists in which he participated with Doctor Krzysztof Szwaagrzyk and Professor Marek Jasiński. The Poles presented the crimes of both totalitarian regimes: the German murders of Soviet POWs and the Polish communists’ murders of soldiers of the Polish anti-communist underground and the pre-war Polish officers.

“The other professors showered us with questions,” he says.

The work on the project serves as a history lesson also to the participating scientists, most of whom are representatives of natural sciences. Yet Andrzej Ossowski is one of those team members who had taken an interest in the post-war history of Poland, and not without a good reason.

“When I sat as a little boy under my grandfather’s table I heard a lot about ‘Łupaszka’ and ‘Inka,’” he starts coyly.

“Come on, do not be shy!” Milena Bykowska encourages him.

It turns out that Ossowski is a grandson of Jerzy Ossowski, a soldier of the Third Vilna Brigade of the AK.

“There was an ‘assembly point’ at my grandfather’s” continues Ossowski. “Soldiers of the underground from entire Poland would come over to talk. I was born in 1978, so some of my school years were still during communism. My teachers gave me some ‘wise advice’ to sit quietly and not repeat what I heard from my grandfather, particularly during my Russian lessons,” he recalls.

The project also aligns with Professor Andrzej Ciechanowicz’s interests:

“I have long been interested in archaeology. I belong to the generation, which saw the Indiana Jones films in the cinema and not on television or DVD. I am interested in Polish history and the history of science in general, and not only on account of my profession. I even considered studying archaeology but in the end my other passions prevailed. I do not regret my choice because I have a very interesting and useful profession, but I am glad that now I have an opportunity to combine it with my interest in history. For it turns out that even a DNA test can have a historical dimension,” he remarks.

This is confirmed by Doctor Tomasz Kupiec, the director of the Forensic Genetics Laboratory of the Cracow Institute of Forensic Research, which aids the Szczecin laboratory in the identification tests.

“Our work in the laboratory almost always concerns very unpleasant events such as homicides, rapes, or assaults. But from time to time we test material connected with well known history. For instance, we tested the remains of General Sikorski and the putative remains of Copernicus. I was glad to learn that we would participate in the identification of remains of the victims of communism. I am convinced that I am participating in something good and important, and this provides me with additional motivation to work,” says the geneticist.

Tomasz Kupiec has similar memories from school to those of Ossowski: the history classroom decorated with Soviet flags and the ban on talking about the Katyn Massacre perpetrators, not to mention the post-war anti-communist underground.

“Before I became engaged in this project I was unaware of the scale of the anti-communist resistance immediately after the war. Now I begin to understand the perfidy of the contemporary show trials. I start to notice how many things we still do not know about, how many stories are there to be discovered.”

Łukasz Szleszkowski:

“At the beginning of my cooperation with Krzysztof Szwagrzyk I knew very little about the Stalinist period but I have learned a lot from the Professor. Let us not delude ourselves – I belong to the generation brought up on [propaganda TV series such as] *Czterej pancerni i pies* [four tank crew members and a dog], where the war and particularly the period immediately after it looked markedly different from reality. At school they still taught us that 1944 and 1945 were the moment when everybody became happy and calm. But in fact the war was not over yet.”

His closest co-worker, Agata Thannhäuser, was educated in free Poland, but – as was often the case with her peers – her teachers did not manage to cover the entire syllabus and simply ran out of time to discuss the post-war period. She is studying history in her work as a forensic anthropologist, that is, on tangible evidence.

“Bones do not lie,” she stresses. “According to the law the death sentences were to be performed by execution, that with a firing squad and a shot in the back. By contrast, here we can see that the method used was the same as at Katyn, namely a shot at the back of the head from a short distance. What was written in the contemporary documents was simply untrue,” one can hear emotion in Agata’s voice despite her declaration (characteristic of most team members) that she separates emotions from her professional work.

Lukasz Szleszkowski adds:

“In fact those were not court-ordered executions, but eliminations of individuals: they were to be fast, effective, and economical. There was no need to assemble a firing squad. The shots were fired by one executioner. Furthermore, the manner in which the executions were conducted perfectly matches the treatment of the defendants during the investigation and the course of the trials – they were fiction. The executioner shot at the skull from close range, which always results in extensive injury. This means that the murderers did not even consider giving the bodies to the families.”

Agata Thannhäuser is happy that the results of her work are going to be discussed in foreign specialist periodicals.

“Let us not delude ourselves, people abroad are generally unaware of what happened in Poland after the war. To my native speaker, an Australian, this subject was entirely alien. He read my article and concluded that he had never heard about such things. Making matters worse, even my friends from Wrocław were surprised that I was digging in the Osobowice cemetery. I told them that if they walked the lanes there they most probably stepped on some remains. ‘This cannot be!’ I hope that at least those who recognised me on television shall learn something. Because they also asked me, ‘You are digging in Warsaw now? You must tell us about it when you come.’ Once I told my students (future physicians) about these works during their classes on identification. One of them approached me after the class and asked me if his grandmother could submit her genetic material. It worked by accident!”

In anthropologist Natalia Szymczak's school history was also neglected but she has long been interested in the Polish post-war history. What she saw in the 'soldiers' field' strengthened her conviction about the nature of communism. Seeing the results of the works in the 'soldiers' field' would undoubtedly have a similar effect on everybody:

“We often hear people saying that it was better during communism. I doubt whether these people know the truth. Could one really live as peacefully as it seems? Those who have been in the 'soldiers' field' shall never to say that again.”

## COMB CALENDAR OR DEALING WITH EMOTIONS

For a month the ‘soldiers’ field’ in Powązki was a site of feverish activity, as is usually the case with excavation sites: hard work from dawn to dusk, dozens of visitors every day, and constant tension.

On 24 August 2012 there is almost no trace of the four-week works in Powązki. But there is the result: several rows of small wooden caskets and a guard of honour. In the caskets are the remains of the 112 people exhumed during the past month. Around them stand all those who contributed to their discovery: Krzysztof Szwaگرzyk, Andrzej Ossowski, forensic medics, archaeologists, and anthropologists.



Caskets with the remains next to the monument commemorating the victims of the communist regime (photo by IPN TV).

A part of the speech given by the visibly moved IPN Chairman Łukasz Kamiński:

“I cannot find the right words to thank Professor Szwagrzyk and all of you. I think that you have felt this gratitude many a time, particularly on the part of those who are the most important here, that is, the victims’ families. We can look at these remains lying before us as at the remains of the Polish Underground State, the remains of what Poland could have been after the end of World War II but what it never came to be. But we can also look at them in a different way. We can look at these people as at a still living source of inspiration to us today. We can look at these caskets as at an element of the foundation of the new Republic of Poland we are building. I think that today’s celebration, the next ones to come, and the funeral itself should not be our last goodbye to these people. For all of us, for all Poles this should also be a meeting with them. A meeting with those, whom the communists tried for decades to make everybody forget. I think that these silent caskets still have a lot to tell us.”



IPN Chairman Łukasz Kamiński during the ceremony of the escorting of the remains from Powązki (photo by IPN TV).

ROPWiM Secretary Andrzej Krzysztof Kunert stresses that even though the search should have begun more than two decades ago, on the threshold of free Poland, there is no point in wondering now why the works commenced so late:



“Let us also think positively. In a moment we shall provide more victims with decent resting places and plaques with their names and surnames, for we shall now begin the process of individual identification with full determination. With time the tools we use in our efforts have become increasingly effective. Why, these victims are particularly worthy of these efforts. For they were sentenced on fabricated charges, sentenced after being tortured during interrogations, for the communists not only tried to force them to confess, but also to disgrace them, bringing the worst charges against them – charges of treason, of collaboration with the occupier, etc. They were sentenced to death and executed as per court sentences. But we know that that did not carry the weight of authority of the Polish state, even though the communists tried to make it look that way. The Republic of Poland is beginning to do justice to the victims in this – excuse the way I put it – material dimension. We shall provide them with resting places, erect their tombstones, put up plaques with their names, and erect monuments. The circumstances of their death, the disgraceful manner of their burial, and their burial places, which from the start were selected in such a way so as to facilitate keeping them secret – these factors are why they deserve all this so much.”



“I might be standing on my father’s grave,” said Witold Mieszkowski during the ceremony of the escorting of the remains from Powązki. A year and a half later it turned out that he was off by only a few metres (photo by IPN TV).

The speech given by Witold Mieszkowski, a son of Commodore Stanisław Mieszkowski, was particularly moving:

“I remember the same prayer said 22 years ago, for this is how much time has passed since the day we laid the cornerstone for this monument, which we then erected. 22 years. We have been waiting for 55 years. We – the children, the sons – have already aged. Our fathers who lie here would be 110 years old now. And this is the sad truth – today in my prayer I beg of you to bear it in mind. Our presence here is a beginning and not the end of the uncovering of this scene of a crime against humanity. I might be standing on my father’s grave. I can even say with high probability that indeed I do so. I think that we shall not wait long for the continuation of these exhumations. I believe that I shall not have to wait another 22 years for that.”

On 1 November 1990 a cornerstone was laid in the ‘soldiers’ field’ – the putative burial site of the victims of communism – for their symbolic commemoration. Designed by architect Dominik Mączyński, the monument in the form of a wall with a v-shaped gap was erected on the initiative of a social committee led by Maria Romer-Kędzierska, the wife of one of the victims, Tadeusz Romer. The construction was dismantled during the exhumations.

After an ecumenical prayer the victims’ families, the research team members, and the directors of the institutions participating in the project take the caskets and solemnly walk to the hearse, which is to transport the remains to Warsaw’s Northern Cemetery, where they are to await the funeral in a cold store. The faces of the people escorting the caskets look focused and moved

“This is precisely the moment when we can give vent to the emotions that have accumulated during our work. There is no place for that during the tests,” says forensic anthropologist Agata Thannhäuser.

What could the team members be thinking about now?

Anthropologist Katarzyna Kuźniarska remembers the tragedies she was able to read from the exhumed bones: that somebody tried to walk for quite some time despite having a broken femur, or that others lived with a bullet in a bone, which caused a horrible purulent fistula, with a broken lower jaw, or with an open abscess in the auditory canal.



Łukasz Kamiński, Krzysztof Szwagrzyk, and Andrzej Kunert escorting the caskets from Powązki (photo by IPN TV).

“Despite their bad condition they did not die of exhaustion but from a bullet – they have a hole in the back of the skull,” stresses Katarzyna. “It is also amazing that all the remains are found *in situ*, that is, precisely in the position and place where they were buried a few decades ago. Finally, the very act of looking day after day for a month at such a large scale annihilation of representatives of our species also has its significance.”

Anthropologist Natalia Szymczak:

“You can try to have a detached approach to your work, but if you take an interest in the fate of our heroes and know the genesis of ‘Łupaszka’ you cannot remain totally calm. When you find bullets or a medallion hidden in the mouth, you inadvertently imagine the story behind them. The most difficult moments were when I found personal belongings, such as an ordinary comb, which proved to be a calendar. It was possible to read from it when its owner had been executed – every day he added a vertical line to mark yet another day of detention. The sentence was carried out when the lines discontinued.”

## AN UNRELIABLE SCRAP OF PAPER OR HOPE DIES LAST

The families, which provided their DNA samples for comparative genetic tests have been waiting for the results since the day the exhumed remains of their loved ones were transported to the cold store. During all those years many of them already lost hope of finding their relatives. But there were also those who did not cease in their efforts. One of them is Witold Mieszkowski. His father, Commodore Stanisław Mieszkowski, fell victim to a show trial on charges of espionage in the Navy and an attempt to overthrow the system. For Mieszkowski was among those pre-war officers of



Commodore Stanisław Mieszkowski with the crew of the 'Mazur' torpedo boat, 1935 (photo from the Mieszkowski family collection).



Stanisław Mieszkowski as the Navy chief of staff, 1947 (photo from the Mieszkowski family collection).

the Polish Army who spent most of the occupation until 1945 in captivity and after the war were mobilised to the People's Polish Army. Having left the *Oflag* in Woldenberg, Mieszkowski decided to return to Poland for the sake of his wife and seven-year-old son, which had luckily survived the Warsaw Uprising.

September 1950 brought the arrest of Commodore Lieutenant Zbigniew Przybyszewski, a Navy Artillery commander. A month later, on 20 October, the communists arrested Stanisław Mieszkowski, a fleet commander.

“He went out to walk the dog in the morning and never came back,” Mr. Witold recalls.

Apart from Mieszkowski and Przybyszewski, six more commodores were arrested. Witold Mieszkowski regards his father's arrest as an act of terror:

“This is a classic example of the state terror common in communist states in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The charges were presented only afterwards. The whole trial was an orchestrated spectacle. The investigation was a nightmare. Of course, I know it only from the archival documents – firstly from the files collected in the military prosecution service which I accessed and then also from the documents stored by the IPN. I also learned a little from the officers sentenced to life imprisonment and released in 1956. The tortures were similar to those described by Kazimierz Moczarski. During two years my father was interrogated more than four hundred times, usually for about a dozen hours at a time. He would confess to the charges invented by Anton Skulbaszewski and then retract his confession, and so on. A couple of times he was detained in a solitary confinement cell: two days in a cold and damp concrete box. Commodore Marian Wojcieszek told and wrote to me about that.”



Stanisław Mieszkowski as a Navy commander, 1950 (photo from the Mieszkowski family collection).

Witold knew his father for only less than six years – from his return in 1945 to the ruined harbour in Kołobrzeg to the day of his arrest in Gdynia. He has no memories of his father from the earlier, pre-war period. But he talks concisely even about the couple of years after his father's return from captivity:

“I was at the age when a boy needs his father the most. I watched him closely. I think that getting to know his way of thinking and his stance determined the path I took in life,” he stresses.

Does he mean patriotism?

“I would prefer not to use such lofty words. What I mean is more about being a decent man and striving for truth without any reservations, as truth is liberating.”

Regina Litke has a lot more to say about her father, Major Jan Czere-dys:

“He was a great father. He was like a buddy, for he was young. I was born when he was only 21 years old. But at the same time he was very mature and responsible. My father got on well with people – he liked them and they liked him. Very energetic, he seemed to be everywhere.”



Witold Mieszkowski with his parents on Kościuszko Square, Gdynia, 1948 (photo from the Mieszkowski family collection).





Senior year of Jan Czeredys at State Construction School, Warsaw, 1932  
(photo from Regina Litke's collection).





Jan Czeredys in the uniform of the Infantry Officer School with his family, 1936 (photo from Regina Litke's collection).



Stanisława and Jan Czeredys with their daughter Regina, 1932 (photo from Regina Litke's collection).



Jan Czeredys with his younger daughter Elżbieta, Warsaw, Aleje Jerozolimskie Street, 1946 (photo from Regina Litke's collection).

It was her father who taught her how to ride a bike. He also intended to teach her how to ride a motorcycle but he did not manage. He bought her lots of books. After the war, whenever there was some new attraction in the ruined capital, he took her and her younger sister to the cinema or theatre. Earlier, during the occupation, he even engaged her in the underground activity. Of course, this is a slight exaggeration for it was just a one-off task given to the unaware 12-year-old girl.

“Right before the Warsaw Uprising he used me as a messenger. I was to deliver an envelope to the address he gave me – the tenement on the corner of Marszałkowska and Widok Streets. My father taught me the password and handed me the envelope. If a gendarmerie truck rolled by I was to run into a gate. I remember that like a scene from a film: the old tenement, the staircase... I knocked on the door, a lady opened it, we exchanged the passwords, I handed her the envelope and quickly ran away. When Mum learned about that she could not forgive my father for putting me in such danger. But apparently, there was no other way to deliver the envelope without arousing suspicion.”

At the end of the war, as early as in 1944, Jan Czeredys joined the People's Polish Army.



12-year-old Regina Czeredys performed a task of an underground messenger, Warsaw, 1944 (photo from Regina Litke's collection).

As did many other pre-war officers, Jan soon fell victim of a purge. His arrest took place on 13 February 1948. Some civilians came to the Czeredys' flat. The family did not know who they were. The strangers spent about a dozen hours searching the flat. Mrs. Czeredys and her daughters were forbidden to leave the room, which the functionaries had ordered them to stay in. The Major was taken away very late in the evening. Where to? Nobody knew.

"Later, a man came to our flat once in a while and ordered us to leave it. His part was off limits. The superintendent, a very kind man, encouraged us to stay and not to be afraid. In the end, when we could not resist any longer, he helped us move into a smaller flat," Mrs. Regina recalls.

Several weeks after the arrest Mrs. Stanisława was summoned to the military counterintelligence (IW) on Oczki Street for a confrontation meeting. She was interrogated first and then her husband was escorted into the room.

"He was so beaten up that she did not recognise him. Even though he was only 36 years old he looked like an old man! Mum said that only when he called her by her name, 'Stasia!' did she recognise him by his voice," recalls Regina Litke.

The investigation conducted by the army counterintelligence lasted seven months. The sentence was passed on 3 November. The contemporary Polish President, Bolesław Bierut, did not use his power of pardon. The petitions for pardon filed by the Major's wife and father were not even answered.

Jan Czeredys was moved to a death cell on Rakowiecka Street, which was where Regina and her mother saw him for the last time.

Late November, or perhaps early December 1948. Long before sunrise, about four in the morning. 16-year-old Regina and her mother are standing in the queue outside the prison gate. They are in luck: they receive a pass. The meeting can take place.

"It was dreadful. I imagined that we would sit normally at a table and be able to touch each other. But there were bars everywhere, two or three metres apart. In between those bars walked an armed guard. The meeting was for a few or about a dozen families at the same time. So it was not much of a conversation. It was more like one big babble of voices. That meeting brought us nothing but more suffering. I suppose that my father felt the same way..."

Nobody informed Mrs. Czeredys about the date of the execution. This was also the case with the Mieszkowski family. When Witold was still in secondary school he decided to move heaven and earth to learn what was

happening with his father. In January 1953 he went to the Chief Military Prosecutor Office in Warsaw and had a conversation with the most important person in that institution, Colonel Stanisław Zarakowski. The boy heard that his father's sentence had been carried out. "Do you believe in socialist justice now?", asked Zarakowski cynically. "No, I do not. I never have and never will," replied Witold.

"That has not changed," he emphasises years later.

Back then he did not believe the prosecutor's words.

"In my father's death certificate there was no date of birth, his rank, or even signatures of the physician and the prosecutor. Is it easy to believe in such a scrap?" he asks rhetorically.

There was also another track: Józef Światło's broadcasts in Radio Free Europe. During one of them that high rank functionary of the communist security apparatus who fled to the West claimed that three commodores had been deported to the Soviet Union. He did not give their surnames but the number and the rank were right, for commodores Zbigniew Przybyszewski and Jerzy Staniewicz had also been sentenced to death.

"Deeply anxious, my mother tightly clung to that information," says Witold Mieszkowski. "After the Polish thaw in 1956, that is after my father's rehabilitation, we applied for his exhumation and punishment for those guilty of the judicial murder. Both our requests were rejected and as we were given no evidence we understood that my father must have been alive!"

Today Witold Mieszkowski is aware that it was a natural psychological self-defence mechanism against accepting the worst thought:

"I was already an adolescent. But other victims had younger children, some of whom were born when their fathers were still being tortured by the communists during the inhuman investigations. I realised that at those blackest of moments those younger ones knew more than I did. For I looked at all that in a more mature way. I resisted accepting the worst thoughts – a fencer always defends himself with an effective guard. Those who were too little to remember anything themselves saw those events through the eyes of their mothers, who were much more severely affected by all that. Those younger than I were mostly boys: Andrzej and Jurek Kraszewski, Wojtek and Maciek Rychłow. The older children were girls: Danusia Przybyszewska, Danusia Michowska, Basia Ścibor, and Grażyna Barbasiwicz."

Lidia Lwow-Eberle 'Lala' was certain of the death of the person closest to her even though obviously nobody notified her about the execution of her

fiancé and commander Major Zygmunt Szendzielarz ‘Łupaszka’. She knew about it only because she was detained in the same prison – she was serving life imprisonment and he was waiting for death. Two weeks before the date of his execution the couple was allowed to meet. They were lucky. Lucjan Minkiewicz, Szendzielarz’s aide-de-camp, whose wife Wanda gave birth to their child in prison, could not see her before his death.

“One afternoon before supper they sat me and Zygmunt in one cell under supervision of three military men. They told us that we could talk about anything we wished for as long as we wanted. One could say that they were very polite,” years later Ms. Lidia is able to talk calmly about her dramatic experiences in 1951. “I was so shocked then that I said nothing and only listened to what Zygmunt was saying. He talked about his daughter Basia [whose mother he had already divorced – K.W.] – that he somehow could not imagine her even though he had seen her not long before that. And about his mother, whom he loved very much. He claimed to love her more than any other woman in the world. He was the youngest son. His mother was alive then and lived in Gdańsk, but he did not meet her. And he told me, ‘Once they release you, you must study and marry’. This is all I remember. We bid our farewell. The execution took place on 8 February. For years I was convinced that it was on 7 February. That was the date I remembered. I had no way of writing it down then,” says Ms. Lidia.

How does she remember Szendzielarz? He was the man of her youth, but first and foremost her commander. The two met in the partisan forces. Already divorced, he told her in the aide-de-camp’s presence to consider herself his fiancée.

“You feel in love.”

“Hmmm... Fell in love...” the elderly lady looks for the right expression. “You know, I knew that I was always on his mind. Even when we were apart I knew that in those difficult conditions somebody remembered me. It was he.”



Lidia Lwow as a student of the Stefan Batory University in Vilna, 1938 (photo from the AIPN collection).





Major Zygmunt Szendzielarz 'Łupaszka' (in the middle); on his left: Second Lieutenant Henryk Wieliczko 'Lufa' and Lieutenant Marian Pluciński 'Mściszaw'; on his right Cavalry Sergeant Jerzy Lejkowski 'Szpagat' and Second Lieutenant Zdzisław Badocha 'Żelazny' (photo from the AIPN collection).

“So it was more like a friendship than a romantic wartime relationship?”

“It was friendship with a subordinate, who I was. Szendzielarz was always a commander to me, even though of course at some point we began to address each other by our first names. He called me ‘Ewelinka’ because I had changed my codename from ‘Lala’ to ‘Ewa’, and he used the form ‘Ewelina’. We had been together until the arrest in 1948. Then I saw him during our hearing and for the last time during that meeting in prison.”

Some of those whose remains were escorted from the ‘soldiers’ field’ in August 2012 never saw their own children. One such victim was Adam Gajdek – a pre-war non-commissioned officer, during the occupation a soldier of the AK and after the war of the WiN. His wife Czesława was also active in the post-war underground but she managed to avoid prison. Adam was arrested in 1947 in Cracow. The couple had a seven-year-old son and Czesława was pregnant, as it soon turned out, with twins.



Adam Gajdek (photo from the Gajdek family collection).



Adam Gajdek during his military service (photo from the Gajdek family collection).



Adam Gajdek with his wife Czesława (photo from the Gajdek family collection).



Czesława and Adam Gajdek with their son Zdzisław (photo from the Gajdek family collection).





Czesława Gajdek with twins Adam and Ignacy and the eldest son Zdzisław (photo from the Gajdek family collection).

“Our father never saw us,” says Ignacy Gajdek, one of the twins. “But Mum informed him that had two sons. In a parcel she sent two onions tied with a ribbon. It was a coded message that she had given birth to twins, two boys. For an onion is more pungent. If we had been two girls she probably would have packed some sweet fruit. A letter would not have passed through the prison censorship.”

Adam Gajdek was executed in the prison on Rakowiecka Street in Warsaw on 14 January 1949, when Ignacy and Adam were just a few months old. Gajdek had not seen his wife even once after his transfer from Cracow. The elder son, Zdzisław, was able to remember him but he did not live until the search in the ‘soldiers’ field’. Unlike most families, the Gajdeks were certain of Adam’s death. Of course, they received no formal notification either, but Adam Gajdek was detained in one cell with attorney Władysław Siła-Nowicki, who as the only one from that group had his death sentence converted into life imprisonment and was released in 1956 – all due to

an intervention of his aunt related to Felix Dzerzhinsky. Consequently, Siła-Nowicki was able to inform the Gajdeks about Adam's fate.

"Later Siła-Nowicki helped us a bit and visited us whenever he was in Cracow. And it was due to his efforts that our father was rehabilitated," stresses Ignacy Gajdek.

How did the sons of Antoni Olechnowicz 'Pohorecki' learn about their father's death?

"We began to suspect it when he stopped sending letters from prison," says Józef Olechnowicz, the younger brother.

He was just one year old when his parents were arrested. Even though his elder brother Krzysztof was six years older he does not remember much either:

"We rarely had contact with each other. One could say that it was sporadic. He had been in the underground my whole life. He was hiding from the Russkis, the Germans, and then the state security."

The Olechnowicz brothers learned the most about their father from his surviving letters from prison:

"I wish to apologise to all of you for having caused you great pain and having brought misfortune on you. Forgive me. Only now have I felt how passionately I love you and that I have lost the ones I love more than life itself. I am looking forward to hearing from you as soon as possible. Kisses to all of you. I press you, my sweet babies, Krzysio and Józio, as close to my heart as I can. And I press your beloved Mummy and my wife Lila equally close. I am sorry for having been a bad father and husband. I bless you. Let God take care of you. Farewell, my beloved. I kiss you affectionately. Keep well and remember me once in a while."

There is also a surviving letter sent by Krzysztof to his father after the announcement of the death sentence (original spelling):

"I learned about you Daddy from the newspapers and the radio and I heard your voice. Józio and I live with aunt Munia and Granma. Were healthy. Im in the 5th grade and Józio goes to kindergarden. Józio is already a big boy. He can count to 5. During sumer holidays I was on a skool camp. It was fun. We receiv letters from mummy and I also write to mummy. If you can, write wether you want soks and whether we can send a food parcel, how many kg. We shal send you 15 złotys for yor expences. If you need underwer, inform us. Daddy, Józio and I kiss you afectionatly. Your son Krych. Im waiting for your letter."

Śr., 26. XI. 1950r.

Moi Najukochanszi: Hilo, Krystiu, Joriko, Babciu,  
Micio i Nabo, cze i Muniu - adresuję do wszystkich, gdyż nie wiem  
kto i gdzie jest. Jestem zdrow, stale niepokoję się o wasze  
zdrowie moi najdrożsi. Proszę o szybki odpowiedź, wywrócić  
jęz o wszystkich. Niech Krystek też choć pami, dowo  
dopise, wnak pisac pewno już dabne moje Kochanie  
umiesz. Całuj wasze czoła <sup>ojcówki</sup> i <sup>Brógodawis</sup>  
was moje najukochansze maleństwo Krystka, Jorika  
i mimiule od Krystka <sup>jęz</sup> chyba niektora wasza  
manusia, a moja <sup>rona</sup> Hilo, wszystkich wygnie-  
nionymy myżij: nie wygniewajcie <sup>też</sup>. Jedno-  
rednie wszystkich was <sup>preparatu</sup>, z <sup>szczęściem</sup>  
niecierpię na was, Kochaniu. Wspominajcie mnie <sup>ca-</sup>  
setu. Całuj was <sup>nocno</sup> i <sup>szczęściem</sup>, <sup>tran</sup> <sup>ojcie</sup> <sup>moż</sup> i <sup>przy</sup>  
<sup>szczęściem</sup> ~~szczęściem~~

Wrocław <sup>26.11.50</sup>  
Kochany Tatusiu!  
Z gazet i rodzica dowiedziałem  
się o tobie tatusiu i słyszałem  
twój głos. My <sup>szczęściem</sup> z Jaxiem  
poży ciu Muni i Babci. Jestem  
zdrowi. Ja jestem w V kl.  
a Jaxie chodzą do przedszkola.  
Jaxio już jest długi chłopakumie  
liczyć do 5-ciu. Ja <sup>(przebie)</sup>  
podczas wakacji byłem na kolonii.

szkolny. Było mi dobrze. <sup>Adm</sup> mamini  
odzywujemy listy i ja też piszę  
do mamusi. Jeżeli ci wolno  
napisz czy chcesz skarpetki i czy  
wolno paczke <sup>wysłac</sup> żywnościowa <sup>niekt</sup>  
Wysłaliśmy ci 15 złotych na  
twoje wydatki. Może ci  
potrzebna bielizna <sup>na napis</sup>  
Całujemy cię mocno tatusiu  
razem z Jaxiem <sup>twój syn</sup> Krystek  
<sup>szczęściem</sup> <sup>twojego</sup> <sup>listu</sup>

Warszawa, Mokotów, Wiernie. ~~20.~~ 7. listopada 1950 r.

Moi Najukochańsi: Lilu, Krzysiu, Józio,  
Babcin, Olu, ciccio, Mulo, Munio i Wrysey.  
Nie wiem kto z Was jest, a kogo nie ma!  
Napiszcie co się z Wami dzieje.

Wszystkich Was przepraszam, i nawa-  
niętem na obłąkanie przykrości i sciągno-  
Tem na Was nieszczęście - wybawcie  
mi. Dopiero teraz odczuwam jak Was  
szalenie Kocham i i utracieciem tych

Których Kocham nad tych. Czekam  
jak najszybciej odpowiedzi. Całyż Was  
wszystkich. Was moje najmilsze ma-  
leństwa, Krzysiu i Józio, przyjacieli do  
serca najdrożej, to samo Wasze najuko-  
chańsze maniusis a moje żone lilu.

Przepraszam, że byłem zły i o wszystkim i wszystkim  
Bóg ostawił, Was, mięk i wam. <sup>Przepraszam</sup>  
Zegnajcie najukochańsi - całyż Was mocno  
Piszeć zdrowi, a mnie wspomnijcie zawsze.  
Mój adres: Warszawa  
Mokotów, Wiernie, <sup>Olędnowicza Antoni</sup>



## IDENTITY CONFIRMATION OR SURNAMES RECLAIMED

When the works in Powązki began none of the families of the victims doubted their relatives' death any longer. By then historians had already accessed the reports on the executions as per death sentences passed by communist courts. The only thing the families could expect in that situation was to ultimately confirm what happened to the bodies. The first ones learned that on 6 December 2012.

Full of hope, the victims' families and the specialists engaged in the search assemble at the 'History Stop' Janusz Kurtyka Educational Centre of the Institute of National Remembrance in Warsaw. Behind the speakers – Łukasz Kamiński, Andrzej Kunert, Krzysztof Szwagrzyk, Andrzej Ossowski, Łukasz Szleszkowski, and Agata Thannhäuser – are three empty stands. IPN Chairman Łukasz Kamiński then reads out the surnames of three soldiers – **Edmund Zbigniew Bukowski**, **Stanisław Łukasik**, and **Eugeniusz Smoliński** – and gives the most important information about their activity, with their portraits appearing one by one on the stands precisely in this order – arranged alphabetically and not according to military rank or merit. That was proposed by PUM Vice-Chancellor Professor Andrzej Ciechanowicz in order to stress that every person's identification is equally important.

Reading out the surnames, Doctor Łukasz Kamiński gives a summary of each person's biography.



**Edmund Zbigniew Bukowski** (1918–1950), 'Edmund', AK Lieutenant. Since birth associated with the Vilna region. Completed his primary and secondary education (Jesuit Fathers' secondary school) there and began to study law at the Vilna University. Soldier of the PPP in the structures of the Service for Poland's Victory (SZP)

/ Union of Armed Combat (ZCZ) / AK. Active is the communications group of the Vilna AK District. Went to Warsaw and back several times transporting radio equipment and code tables. Arrested twice – in 1942 by the Lithuanian police and in July 1944 by the NKVD – but managed to regain freedom on both of those occasions. After his second escape transferred to Warsaw, where he took part in the Warsaw Uprising involved in the setting up of the communications infrastructure for the city. Did not cease his underground activity after the Uprising's failure. Became a messenger of the commander of the Vilna AK District Draft Centre Lieutenant Colonel Antoni Olechnowicz 'Pohorecki'. Carried information, orders, and funds across Europe for the sake of further pro-independence activity. As a member of the staff of the Vilna AK District Draft Centre organised its intelligence network during 1947–1948. Arrested on 28 June 1948 during the state security's operation to destroy the Vilna AK District's network in all of Poland. Maintained an unwavering stance despite very brutal interrogations. Sentenced to death on 14 November 1949 by the Warsaw Regional Court Martial. Executed in the prison on Rakowiecka Street on 13 April 1950. Decorated with many medals including the Cross of Valour and AK Cross.

Source: [www.pozukiwania.ipn.gov.pl](http://www.pozukiwania.ipn.gov.pl)



**Stanisław Łukasik** (1918–1949), codename 'Ryś', AK and then WiN Captain. Born in Lublin as a son of a railway worker. Graduated from the Cadet School for Minors in Konin. Then served in the 23rd Infantry Regiment in Włodzimierz Wołyński. Promoted to Platoon Leader. In 1939 fought with his native unit in the 'Pomerania' Army (Armia „Pomorze”). Avoided captivity and returned to his family home in Motycz near Lublin. Active in the underground since November 1939, initially in the ZCZ, after the joining of the organisations in the Polish Armed Organisation (POZ), and after the unification in 1942 in the AK. During 1940–1943 commander of the Konopnica outpost and fortification. Since January 1944 commander of a mobile detachment of the Directorate of Diversion (Kedyw) in the Lublin-County AK Area. During Operation Tempest it comprised approx. 120 partisans. The detachment was disarmed by Soviet troops on 21 July 1944. Arrested in August 1944 by the Soviets, Łukasik escaped from the NKVD jail at Chopina Street 18 in Lublin and went into hiding. In March 1945 resumed command of a partisan detachment

of the Armed Forces Delegation for Poland (DSZ) and the Lublin WiN Inspectorate. Since June 1945 fought in a group commanded by Major Hieronim Dekutowski 'Zapora'. Came out after the August 1945 amnesty. Went to the Western Territories, from where he then returned to the Lublin region. In the spring of 1946 reinstated his detachment and subordinated it to Major 'Zapora'. Apprehended as a result of a state security provocation on 16 September 1947 in Nysa during an attempt to cross the border with Major Hieronim Dekutowski 'Zapora', Lieutenant Tadeusz Pelak 'Junak', Lieutenant Roman Groński 'Żbik', Lieutenant 'Arkadiusz Wasilewski 'Biały', Second Lieutenant Edmund Tudruj 'Mundek', and Second Lieutenant Jerzy Miatkowski 'Zawada'. Arrested under his pseudonym Stanisław Nowakowski. Subjected to a brutal investigation. Sentenced to death on 15 November 1948 by the Military Court Martial in Warsaw. Executed in the Mokotów prison on 7 March 1949 with Major Dekutowski and five other companions. Decorated with the War Order of Virtuti Militari Fifth Class and the Cross of Valour.

Source: [www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl](http://www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl).



**Eugeniusz Smoliński** (1905–1949), 'Kazimierz Stani-szewski', chemist. Before the outbreak of World War II worked in the State Gunpowder Factory in Pionki near Radom. His expertise was used by the Staff of the High Command of the AK, where he served from 1940 first as an explosives clerk in an underground production detachment and then as the director of an explosives factory. In early 1945 called by the communist authorities to work at the start-up of an arms factory in Łęgnów near Bydgoszcz. Soon became the government's plenipotentiary for the realisation of that plan. In July 1947 launched TNT production. A month later arrested on false charges of sabotage. Sentenced to death in a show trial by the Bydgoszcz Regional Court Martial. Executed in the prison on Rakowiecka Street in Warsaw on 9 April 1949.

Source: [www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl](http://www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl).

“We can wonder what would have been if those people had been able to continue their activity after the war, if they – and not those who murdered them – had been responsible for the reconstruction of Poland,” stresses the IPN Chairman.



Doctor Andrzej Krzysztof Kunert, the ROPWiM Secretary, stresses that both his institution and the IPN are on a mission to restore memory in its various dimensions.

“One of them is to return the names to the victims who have been nameless as intended by the executioners and murderers. When we know the victims’ surnames, in 99 per cent of the cases we do not know their burial place. When we find a burial site we have great difficulty in identifying the remains. Moments such as these are an incredible gift from Providence, which brings enormous internal satisfaction that we do succeed after all.”

Doctor Krzysztof Szwagrzyk projects a plan of the piece of the Powązki cemetery excavated in August and shows where the remains of the identified men were found. Edmund Bukowski was buried only 70 centimetres below the ground.



Krzysztof Szwagrzyk discusses the chronology of the excavations in Powązki (photo by Piotr Życieński).

“I remember how surprised we were by how shallow the grave was. We soon learned that there had been a specific reason for that – Lieutenant Bukowski had been buried there after a different prisoner,” explains Professor Szwagrzyk.

On the virtual board appears a photograph of an uncovered skeleton with the right elbow twisted to the side. These are the remains of Lieutenant Bukowski.

“Please note the position of the remains – he was not laid in but thrown in. The body is in the position in which it landed in the hole. Today, due to our archaeologists’ efforts we know that his arms were thrown about. Furthermore, he was buried wearing shoes and clothes though we still do not know the details,” adds Krzysztof Szwagrzyk.

He also shows a photograph of the Lieutenant’s cracked skull.

“This is what normally happened when the executioners used the ‘Katyn method’. In such cases the skulls are always as damaged as the one in the picture.”

The identified Lieutenant’s son, Krzysztof Bukowski, who is present in the room, has seen such images before. He came to the ‘soldiers’ field’ many a time after his first visit to submit a sample of his genetic material.

“I had no illusions. I saw more or less what I had expected. But that sight cried for vengeance. I looked into that pit and thought about what must have happened... there can be no justification. The shot through skulls



Krzysztof Szwagrzyk and Krzysztof Bukowski during the excavations in the ‘soldiers’ field’ in Powązki... (photo by Piotr Życieński).



...and during the announcement of the identification results (photo by Piotr Życieński).

gave the lie to the propaganda stories about the purported executions by a firing squad,” says Edmund Bukowski’s son.

Professor Szwagrzyk is also trying to explain the order of burials of the murdered prisoners. But the word ‘order’ is definitely an exaggeration here.

“The row we see as the first one was probably made in 1948. The next one, right by the wall, in 1949, while the next ones in 1950, 1951, and 1952 respectively. But this does not mean at all that the gravediggers observed that order every time. The person who buried the victims, state security functionary Władysław Turczyński, claimed that he often buried the bodies in a ‘mosaic’, that is in the spots he selected for various reasons such as accessibility by car.” And this means that the people buried, for instance, in 1950 might be buried in the row of bodies interred in 1949 or 1948.”

This is precisely the case with Eugeniusz Smoliński executed in 1949 and buried in the row of victims killed in 1948. Similarly to Edmund Bukowski, he was also buried on top of another person. Also shot using the ‘Katyn method’, he had particularly extensive injuries. To reach his re-

mains the excavation pits' walls had to be additionally strengthened. The audience watches pictures of the boarding formwork: metal pipes spanning between the boards supporting the excavation pits' walls. Below the pipes – the white overalls and blue helmets of the archaeologists, among them Katarzyna Kuźniarska. This is how she remembers those moments:

“To reach the remains we simply had to crawl under the pipes. It was slightly uncomfortable but there was no other way. The soil profile in Powązki is unusual: the layer of sand in which the pits were dug was covered with heavy, compacted soil – rubble mixed with clay. Such material absorbs rain and weighs down, so the excavation pits were likely to collapse. Thus the boarding formwork.”

We should also note during the excavations in Powązki the team led by Professor Szwagrzyk documented not only the burials from the Stalinist period, but also... the cemetery's topography.

Katarzyna Kuźniarska:

“Nobody really knows the history of this place. During our work we sometimes found, for instance, pipes not included in any plans made available to us. At the very beginning we did not know where the graves of the people we were looking for began or ended. Consequently, we have been also recreating the history of the ‘soldiers’ field’, both in depth and horizontally.”

The third identified man is Captain Stanisław Łukasik ‘Ryś’ – the closest co-worker of Hieronim Dekutowski ‘Zapora’. His body was found in an eight-person burial pit.



Work in a boarded pit (photo by Piotr Życieński).

“Those who buried those remains made a lot of effort to squeeze bodies of eight men in that one relatively small hole,” says Krzysztof Szwaagrzyk and explains that it was possible due to the alternating placing of the bodies: the head of the next victim was put on the previous victims’ feet.

The Professor reveals one more shocking piece of information: the eight men from that grave were buried by the communists in uniforms of... the *Wehrmacht*.

“Let this be a summing up of all our earlier findings. This shows, first of all, the perfidy of the system, and second of all, the scale of difficulty of our work.”

The families had to wait for the next results for over two months, that is, until 20 February 2013. It might seem long but in fact it is quite the reverse – it is a world record. Here are a few figures as of December 2012 to give us the idea of the volume of work performed in the laboratory after the first stage of the exhumations. 109 exhumed remains and DNA samples obtained from 190 people give over 20,000 possible combinations. The number of the established genetic profiles is 40 but only three were identified with the level of certainty (99.9 per cent) sufficient for an official announcement.

In February 2013 four more heroes were given back their surnames: **Stanisław Abramowski, Bolesław Budelewski, Stanisław Kasznica, and Tadeusz Pelak.**



**Stanisław Abramowski** (1922–1948), ‘Bury’, ‘Partyzancik’, soldier of the AK, WiN, and NSZ-NZW, soldier of the partisan detachments commanded by ‘Mściciel’ (WiN) and ‘Orzeł’ (NSZ-NZW). During the German occupation a soldier of the Mińsk Mazowiecki AK Area. After the end of World War II enlisted for the 15th Infantry Regiment of the People’s Polish Army, which he deserted in 1945. In mid-1946 joined the WiN. Fought in the detachment commanded by Janusz Kotowski ‘Mściciel’, which operated in the Siedlce, Węgrów, and Mińsk Mazowiecki counties. Participated in many combat missions against the communist repression apparatus. On 31 March 1947 came out before an amnesty commission. In June 1947 resumed his underground activity. On 26 April 1948 apprehended by the security service functionaries. Sentenced to death during the



Warsaw Regional Court Martial's ex situ session in Kałuszyn on 21 July 1948. Executed in the prison on Rakowiecka Street in Warsaw on 30 July 1948.

Source: [www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl](http://www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl)



**Bolesław Budelewski** (1910–1948), 'Pług', AK and NZW soldier. During the German occupation a soldier of the Ostrołęka AK Area. In January 1946 joined the NZW. Commanded its field company in the Troszyn county subordinate to the 'Orawa' (Ostrołęka) County Command. On 24 July 1947 apprehended by security service functionaries on charges of activity in the NZW structures. Sentenced to death on 5 May 1948 by the

Military Court Martial in Warsaw. Executed in the prison on Rakowiecka Street in Warsaw on 15 July 1948.

Source: [www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl](http://www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl)



**Stanisław Kasznica** (1908–1948), 'Maszkowski', 'Przepona', 'Wąsal', 'Wąsowski', 'Stanisław', 'Stanisław Piotrowski'; WP Lieutenant, NSZ Lieutenant Colonel and commander. Graduated in law from the University of Poznań. 'Brotherly Help' student organisation activist. In 1934 became an activist of the National Radical Camp (ONR). Member of the Polish Organisation (OP) – a secret leadership structure in the ONR. Took part in

the 1939 September Campaign. Began his underground structure in a group commanded by 'Szaniec', whose members recruited from the pre-war 'ABC' ONR. Member of the Civilian Commissariat established at the turn of 1939 and 1940 as a cadres organisation of the national camp for the purpose of preparing the administration on the liberated Polish territories. After the founding of the NSZ, the chief of the General Administration in the National Civilian Service's structures. In the autumn 1943 joined the Provisional National Political Council. Participated in the Warsaw Uprising. Between September 1944 and January 1945 commander of the Częstochowa NSZ District. Between January and



August 1945 commander of the NSZ-OP Inspectorate 'West'. OP intelligence chief from June 1945 and acting NSZ-OP commander-in-chief since August 1945. At the turn of 1945 and 1946 joined the NZW with a NSZ-OP cadre group. On 15 February 1947 arrested in Zakopane by functionaries of Department III of the Ministry of Public Security (MBP). Sentenced to death on 2 March 1948 by the Military Court Martial in Warsaw. Executed in the prison on Rakowiecka Street in Warsaw on 12 May 1948. Knight of the War Order of Virtuti Militari Fifth Class and the Cross of Valour (twice).

Source: [www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl](http://www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl)



**Tadeusz Pelak** (1922–1949), 'Junak', AK and the WiN Lieutenant. Active in the underground since 1941. During the German occupation served in Kedyw's detachment commanded by special force paratrooper Second Lieutenant Jan Poznański 'Ewa', Second Lieutenant Stanisław Jagielski 'Sipak', Second Lieutenant Czesław Piasecki 'Agawa', and Major Hieronim Dekutowski 'Zapora'. In July 1944 by order of Major Dekutowski discontinued his

underground activity after the arrival of the Soviet troops in the Lublin region. Ran a restaurant in Halinówka, which was a contact point for all sub-detachments of the group. Somewhat less than a year later, in May 1945, participated in an attack on the MO station in Nałęczów with a group commanded by Tadeusz Orłowski 'Szatan'. Soon after joined the reinstated group commanded by Major Dekutowski. In the autumn of 1945 and in February 1947 used the amnesties announced by the communist authorities. In the summer of 1947 Major Dekutowski was quartered in his parents' home. At that time Pelak was assigned to the first group of Dekutowski's soldiers to leave Poland, which was apprehended in Nysa on 16 September 1947 by security service functionaries. For over a year subjected to brutal interrogations combined with torture. Sentenced to death on 15 November 1948 by the Warsaw Regional Court Martial. Executed in the prison on Rakowiecka Street in Warsaw on 7 March 1949. Died together with Major Hieronim Dekutowski 'Zapora', Captain Stanisław Łukasik 'Ryś', Lieutenant Roman Groński 'Żbik', Lieutenant Arkadiusz Wasilewski 'Biały', Second Lieutenant Edmund Tudruj 'Mundek', and Second Lieutenant Jerzy Miatkowski 'Zawada'.

Source: [www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl](http://www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl)

Krzysztof Szwagrzyk shows Tadeusz Pelak's picture taken in prison. Pelak was also buried in a *Wehrmacht* uniform. The professor explains:

“Attorney Władysław Siła-Nowicki remembered that the accused were dressed in *Wehrmacht* uniforms for the trial. We know that later, in Mokotów, after the passing of the death sentences they were given prison uniforms. But the victims' bodies we found were in *Wehrmacht* uniforms, so the question is: When did they have to put them on again? We think that it was shortly before the execution. The reason was simple: unlike *Wehrmacht* uniforms, prison uniforms could be reused.”

Due to health reasons Eleonora Kasznica – a stepsister of the last NSZ commander – was unable to attend the official announcement of the identification results. When we talk in her small flat in the Veteran's Home in the Warsaw quarter of Jelonki, she cannot conceal her joy:



The happy Kasznica siblings: Andrzej, Stanisław, Wojciech, Jan, and Eleonora, 1930 (photo from the family collection).

“When my brother was identified I felt relieved that he had finally been lifted from the mud. I am also extremely grateful to Professor Szwagrzyk and his co-workers – the great people who have been looking for our relatives with great determination. During all those years I have believed



Stanisław Kasznica on a tennis court in Poznań, late 1930s (photo from the family collection).

that it would finally happen. There were shreds of information that my brother could have been buried somewhere near Powązki.”

Stach, which is how Ms. Eleonora calls her brother – was 20 years her senior. They had the same father – after his first wife’s demise Stanisław Kasznica senior married her younger sister.

“My brother and I were very close. I remember him very vividly. I was closer to him than to our father, for our father was a very strict, short-tempered, stern man. It was easier for me to discuss certain family or political issues with my brother than with our father. I still miss him,” says Ms. Eleonora.

She still remembers their first meeting in prison:

“On his face we saw traces of brutal abuse. He also told us about the torture the traces of which we could not see... They tortured him brutally, pulled out tufts of hair and nails... But Staś did not waver. We knew who betrayed him. I told him: ‘I shall get this scoundrel!’ But he said, ‘Listen, sister,’ because when he spoke seriously, when he wanted to tell me something important, he always addressed me in that way instead of saying ‘Elunia, Elutka’ as he usually did, ‘Those who have not been tortured cannot judge one who has. Some people can bear it and do not break, while others do not have that strength. So do not judge.’ I do not know whether he forgave the one who betrayed him, but he did understand. I had my own opinion though. The traitor had behaved in a disgraceful way. I do not know his later fate, it did not interest me, but he was free. He had bought his freedom.”



Stanisław Kasznica (in the middle) with his younger sister Eleonora and brother Wojciech (photo from the family collection).

## STRUGGLING WITH EVERYDAY LIFE OR THE LIFE OF THE EXECUTED HEROES' FAMILIES

It is impossible to compare the tragedies of the individual families and it is all the more inappropriate to argue who felt the loss of the relative more acutely. Nevertheless, little children left without a parent inspire particular compassion. Krzysztof Bukowski was deprived for some time of both his parents, for his mother Irena had also been active in the underground. The Bukowskis were arrested at the same time – in June 1946, when Krzysztof was nine months old. He was taken care of by Irena's parents, the Chełmickis, who brought him up with his cousin as Irena's two sisters – Hanna Róża Pieślak and Kalina Chełmicka – were arrested too and sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment. The total number of family members arrested in connection to Edmund Bukowski's case amounted to 16, including Edmund's two brothers.

Irena and Kalina spent over a year in an 'isolation prison' in Inowrocław. They gave their account to Małgorzata Szejnert, who described their experiences in her book *Śród żywych duchów*:

“The prison regulations in Inowrocław almost entirely eliminated meetings, parcels, right to make purchases, correspondence, and the right to private possessions. Irena and Ka-



Edmund Bukowski with his son (photo from the Bukowski family collection).

lina spent over 13 months in solitary cells with the walls partially painted black and the windows painted over with oil paint. They drank from bowls as there were no mugs among the items they received.

To remain sane they had to constantly exercise their memory and will by means of: preparing detailed daily plans of physical and spiritual activities, recalling events and circumstances (for instance, remembering the layout of all flats and gardens they often visited), making various numerical combinations, recalling the content of books read, composing poetry and other texts (for instance, sermons to oneself or others), prayer, spiritual fasts (for instance, refraining from thoughts bringing relief or good memories in order to have something to go back to after a while), etc.



Irena Bukowska and her sister Kalina Chelmicka after their release from prison, 1957 (photo from the Bukowski family collection).

Irena claims that she would have been much more likely to lose her mind if she did not have the need to return to her baby.”

While in other prisons Irena Bukowska met with her little son only a couple of times.



“I saw her for about 40 minutes in total, intermittently,” remembers Krzysztof Bukowski. “A couple of times I went with my grandparents to Inowrocław, Fordon, and Grudziądz. We did not always manage to see her. When we did I had to be lifted up to see over the low wall. There were fine bars up to the ceiling.”

He knew what was happening to his mother and understood that waiting for his father would have been pointless. Besides, according to a letter from the Civil Registry Office to his grandparents, his father was dead.

“The date was correct, but it did not mention the cause or place. That scrap of paper was titled ‘certificate of passing’. Allegedly, the initiates knew that a ‘certificate of death’ regarded natural causes, while an ‘act of passing’ regarded execution in prison,” explains Mr. Krzysztof.

Morning of 17 December 1956. Almost ten years old, sleeping Krzyś is woken up by his mother. The boy knows right away that it is her. She was released after eight years, under amnesty. More or less at the same time her two sisters – Hanna Róża and Kalina (the fourth, eldest sister, Bożena, died in the Warsaw Uprising) – also regained their freedom. Hanna Róża died a few years later.

The grandparents had prepared the boy for his mother’s return.

“I am very grateful to them for informing us about the whole thing in such a way that we knew what was happening. They also managed to do that in such a way that we did not feel inferior, we did not have a chip on our shoulder. As we had been in that situation practically since the beginning, we accepted it as something natural,” stresses Bukowski.

To say that the Chełmickis, Krzysztof Bukowski’s grandparents, were in a very difficult situation would be a great understatement, for their only livelihood was Mr. Chełmicki’s old-age pension. An engineer agronomist by profession, he was dismissed after his daughters’ arrest and he died in 1953.



Irena Bukowska with her son Krzysztof (photo from the Bukowski family collection).

Then, within the framework of social advancement, two families were assigned accommodation in the family's flat in the Warsaw district of Sadyba.

In that situation it became Irena Bukowska's priority to find gainful employment. Before the arrest, under a changed surname, she had begun to study at the Medical Academy. Now, however, she could not resume her studies. After her release, she did not even have an ID and was forced to use a certificate issued in prison. It is easy to imagine what impression it made on her potential employers. In the end though she graduated from a dental technical school and went on to become a prosthodontist. She found a job in a healthcare institution for railway employees, which entitled her to travel by train with her son with an 80-per-cent discount.

That relative stabilisation finally enabled Irena Bukowska to try to learn what had happened to her husband's body. She heard rumours about the cemetery in the Warsaw quarter of Służew and followed that track – as it later turned out a false one – with Małgorzata Szejnert. Having passed away in 1997, she did not live to see the execution report or the discovery and identification of her husband's body.

Elmira Olechnowicz was in a very similar situation. Arrested with her husband in 1948, she was released after five years. Throughout that time her sister, herself a mother of two, took care of Elmira's two sons, Krzysztof and Józef. The whole family – the aunt, uncle, four children, and grandmother – lived in two rooms.

“When Mum returned from prison, aunt brought my brother to her, but he ran away. He did not remember her. I did, for I was older. I loved her very much,” recalls Krzysztof Olechnowicz.

Few children do not regard their mothers as exceptional and wonderful. This is how Krzysztof Olechnowicz supports this claim with regard to his own mother:

“She tried to understand even the security service functionaries. When I told her I wished to take revenge on them, she replied, ‘And what good would that do you?’ She explained that they might have been dragged into that system and that then it might have been difficult for them to leave that criminal service because they had to support their families,” reports Olechnowicz. He also remembers that his mother scrimped and saved so as to keep her boys properly nourished. “In consequence she lost all her teeth throughout a year,” says Krzysztof Olechnowicz.

Even though Krzysztof does not remember his father well and Józef does not remember him at all, the two knew that he had fought for a just cause.

“I was very cautious at school. I did not say a word about my father. But once I said something to my friend, who was a year my senior. ‘You know that you mustn’t talk about it?’ he replied. Once in secondary school somebody called me a ‘bandit’s son’. I smacked him and that was that. The teachers never caused me any trouble on account of my father,” stresses the elder brother.

Józef Olechnowicz, the younger one:

“I remember that when I was 14 or 15 years old my friend and neighbour called me and said that there would be a program about my father on Radio Free Europe, probably on the occasion of the All Souls’ Day. Even though I did not flash my knowledge on my father’s fate some of my friends did know something.”

According to Józef, his father’s past did not frustrate his life plans in any way:

“I was not accepted to medicine, but I do not think that it was because of my surname. I think that I was simply... talented but lazy. I graduated from the School of Physical Education,” he says.

In 1981 Józef Olechnowicz easily obtained his passport and emigrated to the USA. He returned several years ago.

“Do not admit that you know anything about father” – those were the warnings perhaps all children of the Accursed Soldiers heard from their mothers.

“At school nobody asked us about our father. We had no problems on that account. When our peers asked, ‘Where is your dad? What’s up with your dad?’ we would say that he had died in the war. And that was that. All discussions ceased. In a way it is true, for the war went on for many years,” says Ignacy Gajdek, son of Adam Gajdek.

His mother, who was active with his father in the WiN (her codename was ‘Powichet’), remained in hiding for some time after the war.

“While hiding in basements, she contracted arthritis. Dad had to lift her out of the bathtub because she could not do it herself. The inflammation spread to her heart and her health deteriorated. In the late 1960s she became a pensioner and was included in the first disability category. At the end of her life, when she was bed-ridden, we stored Solidarity leaflets under her bed. She died in 1983,” recalls Ignacy Gajdek.

After Mrs. Gajdek had stopped hiding she unsuccessfully looked for a job for a long time. She temporarily lived with her three sons at her sister's in Cracow. In the end she found a job in the steelworks, in the administration.

"I do not really know how she managed that. I suppose that some friend of hers heard that she needed help. People were brought from all over Poland to work in the steelworks. They needed workers," speculates Gajdek.

He admits that the plant management tried to support her.

"They knew about her difficult situation, that she was bringing us up on her own. She was assigned a flat and my brothers and I always went to a summer camp for two months," enumerates Ignacy Gajdek.

Smiling, he tells a story, which nevertheless clearly proves how difficult their situation was:

"When Mum went to the compulsory May-Day parade she always waited until the end. She then walked from gate to gate and collected the fabric, from which she sewed shirts for us. The Cracow flag is blue so she made shirts from the blue fabric, and underwear from the white one."

Not all widows of the killed heroes were able to regain their balance so fast. Mrs. Czeredys broke down and sank in apathy for a long time. Luckily, her 16-year-old daughter Regina showed extreme psychological resilience.

"This is how I am. I probably take after my father. In difficult situations I do not break down but cope and look for solutions. I had to take the helm before my Mum's recovery," recalls Regina Litke.

She immediately enrolled at a typewriting and stenography course. It was a relatively easy craft to learn and in the post-war reality practically every institution needed skilful typists. Regina Litke peeked into several workplaces.

"Whenever I saw a lot of red ties I knew that I needed to run because my past would come to light," she remembers.

Finally, she found a safe haven in the Polish Film State Company.

"But during recruitment I had to pretend to be two years older, because they would not hire a minor," Mrs. Regina remembers a little trickery she was forced to. "I said I was 18 years old. I passed my exam and they immediately decided to hire me. But in the form I had to state my real age. I wrote that I was 16 years old. The human resources officer was shocked, 'What am I supposed to do with you? The personnel already cannot imagine working without you but I cannot hire a minor!' But in the end he managed



16-year-old Regina Czeredys tried to look serious and mature to find a job (photo from Regina Litke's collection).

to find a solution. Most probably I was employed as a minor, part-time," she says.

"Did somebody find out about your tragic family history?"

"They never ran a background check on me. Perhaps I became lucky with people. Or perhaps even if somebody did learn that, they proved decent enough to pretend that they had not. Another favourable factor was perhaps that I never held any high positions."

Mrs. Regina Litke dreamt about studying geodesy at the Warsaw University of Technology, but its students could not

combine studying with work, whereas she needed to work. Consequently, she chose a major, which enabled her to reconcile studying with work: geography at the Warsaw University. Following graduation she was assigned to work in the Military Cartographic Institute.

"The Captain summoned me several times to have a word with me and tried to persuade me to put on a uniform, but I refused for I was still in hiding," she remembers.

Continued since her school years, that 'hiding' consisted of not mentioning her father. When Regina's friends or teachers asked where she went on All Saints' Day to visit her father's grave, she replied that her father had no grave, which after the war was nothing unusual. Everybody understood that her father had died in the war. Only Regina's closest friend and her fiancé and future husband knew everything. In questionnaires she briefly stated the truth: my father is dead. If the questions were more detailed, for instance, whether he had been arrested, she lied.

"I was afraid that somebody would misunderstand that story. For the world was aggressive. A lot of people did not understand the political situation. They thought that as the sentence had been passed by court it must

have been just. My silence proved the right strategy, but it was really difficult for I adored my father and was very proud of him,” she remembers with pain.

The situation I accidentally witnessed during our conversation clearly shows how powerful Mrs. Regina’s old habit of hiding the truth still is. The telephone rings and Mrs. Litke picks up the receiver.

“Sorry, call in an hour because my neighbour has just come in,” says Mrs. Litke and disconnects.

She then realises:

“Can you see?” she asks me. “Even now I did not want to say that I was talking to a lady from the IPN. I still say less than I know...”

Similarly to Regina Litke, Witold Mieszkowski is grateful to those who helped him endure the difficult time after losing his father. He is particularly grateful to the vice-headmistress of his secondary school in Gdynia, Maria Wujtewicz:

“If it had not been for her, I would not have graduated. She outsmarted the security service functionaries. I took my finals at the age of 16. If I had been a year older a consent of the board of education in Gdańsk would have sufficed, but being 16 years old, I had to have consent from the ministry. Mrs. Maria went to Warsaw on her own expense. She told nobody, not even my mother. She kept the document confirming the consent in her purse. On the day of the written exam somebody from the board of education went into the classroom and pointed at me. I knew it was about me but I was unaware of the details. I only noticed that the deputy took out the paper from her purse and that that person went out. If she had not had that paper from Warsaw I would not have passed my finals. Then I was not admitted to the Gdańsk University of Technology, to the Faculty of Architecture, which I had dreamed about. We were deprived of means of subsistence and evicted twice. But other families repressed by the communists were no better off. We somehow managed due to our friends. For we had as many friends as the scared and chilly, and less often hostile, acquaintances,” he stresses. “Fear, lies, and crime are the three main attributes of the communist regime.”

Marta Mieszkowska, Mr. Witold Mieszkowski’s wife, adds:

“Of course, many of their friends were afraid to help for fear of repressions. But this is precisely what civic courage and friendship are all about – one does not think about such things. My husband had to move to a flat



without a bathroom so he would go to his school friend's home to wash himself. That friend's father, a master mariner, who went on long voyages in the merchant marine, was forbidden to sail, precisely for having the 'spawn of a spy and criminal' as a guest in his home. Only in such a situation does one learn the true value of a man. This makes one believe in men and friendship. Luckily, there were more people like Wanda and Bohdan Jędrzejewski, who, for instance, let Witold wash himself in their home. Unfortunately, there were those who crossed to the other side of Świętojańska Street [the main street in Gdynia – K.W.] to avoid bowing to my husband's mother. And after the Navy commander had been sentenced to death they turned their head away pretending not to see 'that Commodore's wife' and did not even bother to cross to the other side."

## RETURN TO THE 'SOLDIERS' FIELD' OR THE EXCAVATIONS UNDER THE ASPHALT

Let us remember that having heard that Commodore Stanisław Mieszkowski could have been buried on the outskirts of Powązki Witold Mieszkowski and his mother began to light candles at the putative burial place of their father and husband after their move from Gdynia to Warsaw. Later Witold Mieszkowski would bring his wife and daughter to that place. They would also try to guess where exactly Stanisław Mieszkowski had been buried. The prospects for the ultimate answer to that question appeared on 13 May 2013 with the launch of the second stage of the exhumations in the 'soldiers' field'.

Most team members who had worked there a year earlier eagerly resumed their activity. Among the new members is Adam Falis, an archaeologist from Warsaw, who applied because the team needed somebody with considerable experience in measurements and field work documentation.

"I am very experienced but shall I cope with this kind of tasks? I have never participated in exhumations," he hesitated at first.

The work quickly absorbs him. He feels like a cog wheel whose proper operation is essential for the success of the whole project.

"The priority is to determine the outlines of the burial pits. Another thing sometimes important in this type of work is the stratigraphy (the layering) outside the death pits. It tells us, for instance, whether the area has ever been levelled or whether there has been any other interference, for instance, other holes. If these were classic archaeological excavations it would be equally important to examine all stratigraphic structures and we would have spent thrice the time here," explains the archaeologist.

In 2012 the 'soldiers' field' welcomes the first voluntary workers not professionally associated with archaeology, who a year earlier had watched the team at work. One of the volunteers, Monika Mużacz-Kowal, a law-

yer by profession, approached Professor Szwagrzyk on the occasion of a screening of Arkadiusz Gołębiewski's film *Kwaterna Ł* [section Ł] and asked him if she could help during the next stage of the excavations.

"I have always been interested in the Unwavering Soldiers and contemporary history. The 'soldiers' field' is a place that has accumulated this history. This is the burial place of the elite, the most important people in the PPP," she gives the reasons for her engagement. "I have lived in Warsaw for almost a decade. Throughout this time I have visited the 'soldiers' field' many a time as a probable resting place of the heroes."

Monika brings six of her friends, including Marek Nadolski, who did not hesitate even for a moment when he heard her proposal.

"I have dreamed about it. I have long been interested in the PPP and the history of World War. My parents always took us to Powązki on 1 August, while on 3 May and 11 November – holidays forbidden at that time – we also went to places connected with Polish history, where they tried to teach us something," he remembers.

Monika, Marek, and their friends take two days off, assuming that this is the amount of time that they are going to devote to helping the search team. When they come to the 'soldiers' field' at seven in the morning (the team has been working for a week, but it is the volunteers' first day), it is raining down 'in buckets'. Last July the weather was good (even though the heat was exhausting, it did not rain), but this time it is cold and wet. The volunteers sweep away the water to prevent the 'base' – tents, tables, and chairs – from being inundated. They also prevent the boxes with the unearthed remains from becoming wet for it is impossible to isolate DNA from wet bones.

Mostly busy with rescue efforts on their first day, during the next ones the volunteers are already helping to dig pits and clean bones. For eventually they stayed in the 'soldiers' field' until the end of the stage, that is, for two weeks. They begin with long bones, that is, of the arms, forearms, and shanks. With time, when the specialists deem that they have become proficient, they clean skulls too. The same as the archaeologists, they wear masks and rubber gloves to protect both themselves from possible infection and the future research material from becoming contaminated with the DNA of their epidermis.

"It is better to buy six hundred pairs of rubber gloves than to spend many times that on additional DNA isolation," stresses Doctor Andrzej Ossowski.

The same as the archaeologists, the volunteers concentrate first and foremost on careful execution of the assigned task. But they do not hide their emotions.

Monika Mużacz-Kowal:

“I never suspected that I would be touching human bones. I was surprised that I treated these remains with love. It might sound pompous, but all that time I thought that that was the first time that they were caressed after death. When somebody close to us dies, we can squeeze their hand, kiss them on the forehead, and bid our farewell. These people have been deprived of that. Our work, the cleansing of the bones of the dirt, was the first touch of love.”

Marek Nadolski:

“When I called my friends who had offered to help, some said that they would not manage psychologically. Later I was often asked, ‘How did you cope? My hands would be trembling if I touched those bones.’ I am not going to pretend that I was tough. My hands were shaking too, and a few times I had tears in my eyes and I clenched my fists.”

The specialists are trying to share their knowledge with the volunteers. Professor Szwagrzyk often calls those who are cleaning the bones to the pit to discuss the unique features of a skeleton found. The forensic medics explain what typing consists of and how it proceeds. Monika looks for Major Szendzielarz’s distinctive feature – a diastema, a gap in between teeth.



Monika Mużacz-Kowal: “For the executed the cleansing of the bones was the first tender touch after their death” (photo by Piotr Życieński).

Adam Falis:

“Archaeology has taught me to read history from what I find during excavations. When I see a skeleton with the skull shot through, it is a fact. Nothing can change that. I then visualise, try to recreate what might have happened after that man’s death and before he was brought here. This thinking starts automatically. I am particularly shocked by those pits where the bodies were obviously squeezed in. For it means that the holes were too small. They might have been dug in winter, when the soil was frozen and the gravediggers did not want to exert themselves. It is distressing to me that these corpses were treated as a side effect of a terrible crime – a useless material, a waste to be disposed of, hidden, and forgotten.”

Marek Nadolski:

“The people who claim that communism was a wonderful system should work for a while in the ‘soldiers’ field’. They would see with their own eyes how ‘beneficial’ communism was.”

Adam Falis elaborates on this thought:

“Of course, when I began working in the ‘soldiers’ field’ I knew about the communist terror. But when I saw it with my own eyes I became even more aware of how many people do not know what that system was or how it treated people. Those who have not heard about these crimes will not understand them. My work enables me to go back in time and touch that awful truth. I am even more shocked by the fact that those were not crimes committed by the occupiers, even though in a way they were committed by the Soviet system. They were committed with Polish hands. It is difficult to talk historically about the crimes of Poles on Poles.”

“I always wondered whether the skull or the bone I was cleaning belonged to the father of the person who had just visited us,” says Monika Mużacz-Kowal. “Looking into Zofia Pilecka’s eyes I felt that the Captain was looking at me. That gaze was full of trust, kindness, and hope. Such moments give us strength and faith that what we do is necessary, that these are not just some ordinary archaeological excavations. For the nation is waiting for the discovery of these remains to do justice to history. But it is the children and sometimes wives of these people who are waiting most impatiently for the identification.”

Anthropologist Katarzyna Kuźniarska recalls a special day during the first stage – 1 August, the 68<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising. It was like an open day in the ‘soldiers’ field’ for there were more people than usual in Powązki:

“Because of the works there was no access to several symbolic graves and we intended to put candles there if somebody came especially to do that. And indeed, a man came with a candle followed by an elderly lady. I asked the latter whether she wanted to light the candle by the joint monument or on some specific grave. That lady handed me the candle with tears in her eyes. Of course, I meant one of the symbolic graves, but these people have been looking for their loved ones for so long that even such an expression as a ‘specific grave’ can make them cry.”

Adam Falis:

“Once an elderly relative of one of the victims came over and praised our patience during that arduous process, whose sole purpose is for the families to find their relatives and give them a decent burial. ‘I can see,’ said that person, ‘that the people who work here were not chosen by accident.’ It was very important to me. I felt honoured and appreciated. At such moments one feels that engaging one’s knowledge, skills, and sensitivity in such searches is worthwhile.”

The support of the victims’ families was particularly precious to the team members. The patties and coffee brought by the Mieszkowskis have become legendary. The families’ engagement gave the scientists further motivation to do their utmost.

Marta Mieszkowska explains:

“We paid frequent visits because we live in the Żoliborz quarter, close to Powązki. During the exhumations my husband went there practically every day. We sometimes took our grandchildren too. We have always thought that children who understand what is going on around them should be showed important events, and our elder grandchild, Filip, does. The younger one, Julka, does not understand everything yet, but she is bound to remember it. What is happening in the ‘soldiers’ field’ is not for us, but for them, for their generation. They should see tangible evidence of the evil of dehumanisation, of communism in its pure, brutal form, of what it was like.”

Zofia Pilecka-Optułowicz, a daughter of Captain Witold Pilecki, whose body has not yet been found, also visits the ‘soldiers’ field’, often with a backpack of doughnuts and beverages so that the members of the search team “do not have to drink just any water,” as she says.

“I come here not only because I await my daddy’s discover. I am fascinated by the reverence with which this team works. I admire their respect





Zofia Pilecka-Optułowicz handing titbits to Krzysztof Szwaigrzyk and Andrzej Ossowski (photo by Piotr Życieński).

for every tiny bone, which they sift and then bring to the forensic medic. One has to see this to see how respectfully a living man treats the remains of a dead one.”

One can imagine how exhausting this work is, sometimes for more than ten hours a day, in heat (during the first stage) or cold (a year later). It also proceeds at full speed and with maximum concentration.

Katarzyna Kuźniarska:

“When I am the one responsible for ensuring that the work in a burial pit is performed as accurately as possible, I think about nothing else. I do not even notice that somebody is standing next to me, even if it is the minister, who has come to visit us and see how the work is progressing. When somebody called me to look back, I was shocked that there was somebody there.”

She adds that at such moments it is easy to forget that one is hungry or thirsty, or even that one has to use the toilet.

“But Professor Szwaigrzyk always tried to make sure that we found the time to eat something,” emphasises the anthropologist. “He even chased us

out of our workplaces and promised to watch them. But sometimes his appeals did not work either because we were too absorbed in our work. That was why sometimes after a whole day's work we had to lie down for half an hour before we could take a shower and change."

Agata Thannhäuser has similar impressions:

"After a month's work in the 'soldiers' field' I need a week to recover. I take a week off and I do not speak with anybody because I am physically and psychically tired."

During the first stage the Sundays were off, but during the second stage the team worked seven days a week. Agata had to leave her post in the 'soldiers' field' for one weekend to fly – so as not to waste time on travelling by train or car – to Wrocław to have classes with her students.

"Only then did I feel how exhausted I was. I returned home late in the evening and in the morning I was barely able to get up. The next day, after the classes I wanted to read something for the next class, but of course I slept through the afternoon. And once in Powązki, after a sleepless night, I feel asleep for a moment while writing a report," she explains.

During the second stage the team not only digs up the ground but also the asphalt lane separating the Ł section from Ł-II. It is necessary because the remains of the victims might also be buried there. And indeed they are. It is found that more than 80 people were buried there. But this is not the last stretch of land to be examined. For according to the documents, the 'soldiers' field' should hold the remains of approx. three hundred people, while the team has managed to find less than two hundred. This means that some of the bones must be under the tombstones erected in the 1980s.

So the archaeologists drill boreholes among the graves: every 30 centimetres and about 2 metres deep. The bones are there indeed. Consequently, they must be exhumed.

Krzysztof Szwańczyk:

"I cannot imagine a situation where we announce that we shall not carry out the third stage of the search due to problems of a technical, logistic, or legal nature. These remains simply must be exhumed. If somebody doubts this I would ask them: 'What if among these remains are the remains of General Fieldorf or Captain Pilecki?' For information about the remains of 90 people is something different from information about who they might be, what great men those could be."



**August Emil Fieldorf** (1895–1953), 'Nil', pseudonyms: Emil Wielowiejski, Walenty Gdanicki. Born in Cracow. In 1910 joined the Riflemen Association, where he completed a non-commissioned officer training. In 1914 volunteered to the First Brigade of the Polish Legions, with which he fought in the Russian front line. In 1917 sent to a military academy. After the oath crisis conscripted to the Austrian army and transferred to the Italian front

line. Deserted and in August 1918 volunteered to the Polish Military Organisation in his hometown of Cracow.

Served in the Polish Army since November 1918. During 1919–1920 participated in the Vilna Offensive. Following the outbreak of the Polish-Soviet War took part as a company commander in, for instance, the liberations of Daugavpils and Zhytomyr and also in the Kiev Offensive. After the war continued his military service. In 1928 promoted to Major and transferred to serve in the First Infantry Regiment of the Legions as a battalion commander. Seven years later transferred to serve as the commander of an independent 'Troki' border guards' battalion in the 'Vilna' Regiment of the Border Protection Corps (KOP). A year later promoted to Lieutenant Colonel. Shortly before the outbreak of World War II appointed commander of the Fifty First Giuseppe Garibaldi Rifle Regiment in Brzeżany within the framework of the Twelfth Infantry Division, which he commanded during the 1939 September Campaign. After Polish defeat in 1939 managed to reach the Polish Armed Forces in France. In 1940 appointed the first emissary of the Government and the Commander-in-Chief and sent back to Poland, where he organised the Kedyw of the AK High Command, whose commander he then became.

In 1944 assumed command of the 'NIE' Organisation (the first three letters of the Polish word for independence – 'niepodległość') prepared to act under Soviet occupation. In October 1944 appointed deputy AK Commander-in-Chief. On 7 March 1945 arrested under a false surname by the NKVD in Milanówek and – unrecognised – deported to a labour camp in the Ural Mountains. In October 1947 returned to Poland. Next February revealed his real name and surname and military rank to the authorities. On 10 November 1950 arrested by the state security and detained in its gaol in Warsaw. Charged with ordering the AK to liquidate Soviet partisans. Despite torture refused to collaborate with the communists. Sentenced to death by hanging on 16 April 1952 by the Provincial Court in Warsaw. Executed on 24 February 1953 in the Warsaw prison on Rakowiecka Street. Rehabilitated in 1989.



**Witold Pilecki** (1901–1948), codenames: ‘Witold’, ‘Tomek’, ‘Romek’, pseudonyms: Tomasz Serafiński, Roman Jezierski, Leon Bryjak, Jan Uznański, and Witold Smoliński. Born in Ołonec (in the Russian Karelia). Attended middle schools in Vilna, where he set up an underground scouting organisation, and Orel. In 1918 and 1919 took part in the defence of Vilna against the Bolsheviks. In July 1920 joined the Polish Army to fight

in the Polish-Soviet War. In 1922 began to study at the Fine Arts Faculty of the Stefan Batory University in Vilna. Soon forced by his difficult financial situation to discontinue his studies and find gainful employment. In 1926 took over his family farm in Sukurcze and began its modernisation. Set up a farmers’ club and a dairy, whose chairman he became. Irrespective of that, every year participated in the Twenty Sixth Cavalry Regiment’s military training. In 1932 formed the ‘Krakus’ Mounted Military Training in the Lida county composed of the nearby military settlers. Appointed commander of the First Lida Training Cavalry Squadron. In 1938 decorated with the Silver Cross of Merit for his community service. In 1937 the First Lida Training Cavalry Squadron commanded by Pilecki was incorporated into the Nineteenth Infantry Division commanded by Brigadier General Józef Kwaciszewski. In September 1939 the Division fought in the vicinity of Piotrków Trybunalski. After the Division had been destroyed its soldiers crossed the River Vistula and joined the ranks of the reinstated Forty-Fourth Reserve Infantry Regiment. Major Jan Włodarkiewicz became the commander of the Division’s cavalry, with Second Lieutenant Witold Pilecki as his deputy. After the Soviet invasion of Poland that division was also crushed. Some of its soldiers managed to reach the West through Hungary, while some, including Pilecki, began their underground activity against the occupier. They established the Underground Polish Army (TAP) commanded by Włodarkiewicz. In 1940 TAP began to cooperate with the ZWZ and in 1941 became subordinated to it.

On 19 September during a roundup in the Warsaw quarter of Żoliborz let himself be arrested and deported to the Auschwitz German concentration camp in order to form an underground there and obtain reliable information about the conditions in the camp. Escaped with two fellow prisoners at Easter, on the night of 26–27 April 1943. After his escape until the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising maintained contact with the camp underground activists and tried to provide their families with material aid. In 1944 participated in the preparation of the structures intended to plan combat operations of the emerging ‘NIE’ organisation, which was to counteract the approaching danger of the Soviet occupation.

Fought in the Warsaw Uprising. After its failure deported to camps in Lamsdorf and Murnau. After the liberation assigned to the Second Corps of the Polish Armed Forces in Italy. In October 1945 set out to Poland and in December arrived in Warsaw. After the dissolution of the 'NIE' organisation by General Władysław Anders again began to create a communications network. Cooperated with former TAP soldiers and members of the camp underground. Obtained secret information about the situation in the country, which he transferred to the Second Corps through messengers. Recorded his memories from the underground activity in Auschwitz. On 8 May 1947 Pilecki was arrested by state security functionaries. 23 others people were arrested in connection with his case. The brutal investigation lasted six months. Tortured, on 4 November 1947 Pilecki confirmed his testimony and signed the formula confirming their voluntary character. Immediately after his arrest his friends from Auschwitz appealed for an intervention to the contemporary Prime Minister Józef Cyrankiewicz, also a former prisoner of KL Auschwitz. But the P.M. sent a letter to the presiding judge urging the court to disregard Pilecki's achievements during his underground activity in the camp and to treat him as an "enemy of the people and the People's Republic of Poland." Pilecki was sentenced to death on 15 March 1948. President Bolesław Bierut, did not use his power of pardon. The execution took place on 25 May 1948. Acquitted by the Supreme Court in 1990. In July 2006 posthumously decorated by Polish President Lech Kaczyński with the Order of the White Eagle for his merit and commitment to the homeland. In 2013 posthumously promoted to Colonel by Minister of National Defence Tomasz Siemoniak.

Source: [www.pilecki.ipn.gov.pl](http://www.pilecki.ipn.gov.pl)

Zofia Pilecka-Optułowicz has sought her father all her life. She was on the verge of accepting the thought that Captain Witold Pilecki's body was cremated for she heard accounts that he was specially escorted for the execution to the boiler room of the prison on Rakowiecka Street. Yet, she did not lose hope. Wishing to believe that her father was buried in Powązki, Ms. Zofia is convinced that he brought her there through the agency of her little daughter Ania Krysia, born in 1958 as the second of her three daughters.

"She was perfectly healthy, but then she unexpectedly died on the second day after birth. The lady physician opened the door to the room and dryly said, 'Your baby has died.' This is how it was back then. We buried

her in the new children's section of the municipal cemetery – the Military Powązki cemetery. As it later turned out it was in the immediate vicinity of the 'soldiers' field'. This is why I still believe that my father is here. I am convinced that he brought me to this place,” says Zofia Pilecka.

She did not hesitate even for a moment to submit her DNA sample for comparative genetic tests. This is the last chance for her long search to finally succeed. After Witold Pilecki's arrested in May 1947, Zofia's mother, Maria Pilecka, brought him a parcel every month (it was forbidden to do it more frequently). Once when she arrived the prison guards told her, 'Your husband is not here. He is away.' Where? When? Of course, nobody told her anything. At first, Maria suspected that he had been deported to Siberia. She tried to learn something about Witold on her own. Desperate, she even went to a fortune teller. All in vain. With time, she accepted the thought that she would never find her husband, but her daughter did not give up, persistent in her efforts to discover her father's fate.

“At some point Mum began to tell me that I was obsessed and that I should stop looking. But I treated my search as a gift to my father. I was convinced that the more obstacles, the better, for they would only make my gift more precious. I thought that my effort had to be the greatest possible because I was doing that for somebody so close to me, somebody who experienced such an unspeakable magnitude of suffering in his life,” stresses Pilecka-Optułowicz.

Zofia is reluctant to talk about herself. She refuses to say what she has been through during the search, because, as she claims, it would be like giving a present to somebody and then bringing up its dear price. But we can try to imagine the price she had to pay: she was forced to quit her studies, could not find a job for a long time, and lived in more than modest conditions – suffice it to say that to heat her room she often had to collect fir cones because she could not afford coal.

Zofia Pilecka-Optułowicz recalls:

“I began studying hydraulic engineering at the Warsaw University of Technology. All the assistants were 'red'. When they disapproved of somebody's political views they did not give him credit for the classes making him unable to take the exam with the professor. Once a lecturer wanted to have a word with me. He said, 'My child, quit your studies. You would only wreck your nerves. Times might change one day...' I followed his advice. I was already a fiancée and soon I became a wife and a mother.”



That world was so different from the warm and safe one Ms. Zofia remembered from Ostrów Mazowiecka! As early as during the German occupation she moved with her mother and brother Andrzej to her grandmother, who lived there. Even at the most horrible moments, after her father's arrest, she could rely on her peers and teachers' support. She can still remember propaganda radio speaker Wanda Odolska's venomous voice coming from a speaker in a school corridor. Odolska was discussing Witold Pilecki's trial, calling him a traitor of his homeland and a spy. The teacher then asked 14-year-old Zofia if she was related to that Pilecki. "Yes, he is my father. And I am proud of him!", replied the Captain's daughter. The teacher did not comment on that, which in those circumstances required considerable courage.

A few years after quitting her studies, due to help from some kind people she finally managed to find a job in the INCO chemical company associated with the PAX Association. Officially a full-time manual labourer, she was in fact an office worker. That resulted in a relatively modest salary, but it was enough to manage on.

In the late 1980s, using contacts in the PAX Association she was able to meet Józef Cyrankiewicz, former Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Poland and Auschwitz prisoner (in communist Poland Cyrankiewicz attributed Witold Pilecki's achievements in the camp to himself). Zofia hoped that Cyrankiewicz would tell her something about her father's burial place.

"Cyrankiewicz was very polite to me. He welcomed me politely, almost enthusiastically, as if happy to see me. I used my husband's surname, Op-tułowicz, so I am uncertain whether he knew who I was when he greeted me. I told him right away that my visit would be very brief because I only wanted to ask him for help in establishing where my father, Witold Pilecki, had been buried. 'Witold Pilecki? And who is this Witold Pilecki?' he replied. I became furious! I told him that in that case I had no more questions. I must have made a very stern face, because he tried to somehow mollify the situation. He promised to ask 'the right people' and meet me again. But I did not hear from him, for he soon died."

"Auschwitz was a trifle," Witold Pilecki purportedly told his wife at the end of the trial on Rakowiecka Street, describing the torture used by the state security. According to the account of Father Antoni Czajkowski, who was arrested in connection with Pilecki's case and detained in the same

prison, the Captain was subjected to particularly brutal torture. The clergyman also claimed that after the last interrogations Pilecki's collar bones were broken due to which he could not keep his head straight, while his arms dangled listlessly on both sides of his torso.

A little earlier, during one of the meetings in prison, Witold confided in his wife that he could not live any longer. But he had long hoped that his activity in Auschwitz – the organisation of the camp underground – would save his life.

Zofia Pilecka-Optułowicz:

“My father asked his sister-in-law, Eleonora Ostrowska, also an underground member, to show the investigators the testimonies she kept regarding the resistance movement organisation in Auschwitz. Eleonora acted on his request.”

The functionaries took all the materials, but unfortunately that did not save Witold Pilecki's life, but his daughter suspects that his contribution might have prevented the family from sharing his fate.

Zofia Pilecka compares her relationship with her father to the education process. The time after his arrest and the search period are like studies, whereas the period of the German occupation after her father's escape from Auschwitz is an equivalent to the first grades of primary school:

“When he escaped from the camp in 1943 I was ten years old. He was in Warsaw and we lived at Grandmother's in Ostrów Mazowiecka. I visited him and reported all my achievements in sport, to which he attached great importance: I could do the splits, I ran a hundred metres, I was in a volleyball team, I swam... ‘Oh, it is great that you swim. It is very



Witold Pilecki, 1920s (photo from the family collection).

important!’ he praised me. ‘If I could not swim I would not have escaped from the camp, because I had to swim across the River Sola. You never know when such a skill might prove useful’. He also taught me how to act as an underground member. We rode a tram in Warsaw and alighted at some point. He gave me a task: warn the man walking behind you against an approaching gendarme. I was to walk up to a wall or shop window when I saw a gendarme. That was to be a sign for the person walking behind me.”



Witold Pilecki with his wife Maria at the Sukurcze estate (photo from the family collection).

As is easy to guess, Zofia has the fondest memories of the ‘kindergarten’, that is, her childhood spent at the family estate in Sukurcze, near Lida (present-day Belarus). There is a lingering stereotype that military men, particularly of the old-fashioned, pre-war type, are rather dry and concentrated on their own career and have difficulty communicating with children. Even if that conviction sometimes found its reflection in reality, it was certainly not true for Witold Pilecki. It was he who spent mornings with the children, Zosia and Jędrek, while his wife Maria taught in the local school. When she came back tired she usually had a surprise waiting for her, for instance, the children dressed up as fairy tale characters. It was of course her husband who came thought of that entertainment.

“He was a man of numerous talents, which he did not hide, but developed at every step. He wrote a poem about Sukurcze, whose fragment I found. He painted beautifully: above their marital bed he painted a white and blue fresco depicting the nursing Virgin Mary and for the children – dwarves dancing around a mushroom. It was beautiful!” delights his daughter. Pilecki also donated his paintings to the church in Krupa near Sukurcze.

Ms. Zofia adds that her father was a born pedagogue:

“Every day he instilled values to guide us in life. Looking back at those times, I have an impression that he was somewhat in a hurry, as if he could sense that he did not have much time. He called me an ‘heirress of fresh air’.

I asked him what that meant. He explained that one day the things I was looking at, which were so beautiful, might be no more, and that one must adapt to that. He said that I had to be a woman general – a brave person who could cope in every situation.”

Stimulating his children’s courage and giving them moral guidelines for their whole future life, he did his best also to make them sympathetic to all living creatures:

“Once we went for a walk. At the last moment my Dad noticed a ladybird under my feet, which I had not seen. ‘What carelessness! You would have squashed that ladybird,’ he told me. ‘Take it and put it on a leaf, where it shall be safe.’ He also claimed that the horse was an exceptional animal with a soul. Why? ‘Well, a horse is so wise,’ he reasoned, ‘that once when I was galloping on my mare, Bajka, to our Sukurcze estate, she suddenly halted. At first it seemed there was no reason for that. But then it turned out that there was a child lying on the ground, which I did not see from horseback.’ To my father it was a proof that horses were exceptional creatures.”



Zosia and Jędrek Pilecki dressed up for their mother’s return from work (photo from the family collection).

## THE RESTORATION OF SURNAMES CONTINUES

The next results of the enormous effort of the search team are presented on 22 August 2013. That time nine heroes are given back their surnames: **Władysław Borowiec**, **Henryk Borowy-Borowski**, **Hieronim Dekutowski**, **Zygfried Kuliński**, **Józef Łukaszewicz**, **Henryk Pawłowski**, **Zygmunt Szendzielarz**, **Wacław Walicki**, and **Ryszard Widelski**.



**Władysław Borowiec** (1916–1948), 'Żbik', AK soldier, accountant. Before the German invasion of Poland in September 1939 graduated from an officer cadet school. Took part in the 1939 September Campaign as a cadet and Platoon Leader. Fought in defence of the capital and then in the east. In the underground since its beginning. In 1943 moved to Tarnobrzeg. After the end of World War

He worked as an accountant in the Poznań Branch of the Repossession and War Reparations Office. Soon transferred to the Berlin branch of the Office, initially working on the same position and then as an intendant and English translator. Apprehended on 29 November 1947 on charges of espionage. Sentenced to death on 4 August 1948 by the Warsaw Regional Court Martial. The Supreme Court Martial upheld the sentence on 14 September 1948. President Bolesław Bierut did not use his power of pardon. Executed in the prison on Rakowiecka Street in Warsaw on 25 September 1948.

Source: [www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl](http://www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl)

The remains of Władysław Borowiec were found on the bottom of a six-person pit.

Krzysztof Szwagrzyk:

“The positioning of the remains suggests that the victims buried here were killed in two executions: four in the first one and two in the other. Af-

ter removing the top layer of soil we saw a dreadful sight. The remains of the victims were mixed together and our specialists put a lot of effort into extracting the individual remains. We must remember that the remains are rarely complete.”

The identification certificate of Władysław Borowiec was collected by his granddaughter Anna Tasiemska. Unfortunately, her mother Barbara, the identified soldier’s daughter, did not live until that moment. Luckily, however, she managed to submit her DNA sample for comparative genetic tests before passing away a month later.

“I am happy to live in a country that seeks redress for the wrongs done to its citizens,” says Anna during the ceremony.

This story would make a great film – this opinion so often heard nowadays would fit many of the identified individuals. Even the communists from the Ministry of Internal Affairs shared that opinion with regard to Władysław Borowiec. Only that Anna Tasiemska’s grandfather was to be the villain – a ‘bandit’ pursued by invincible agent J-23. In the end, however, the continuation of the popular TV series about agent Hans Kloss did not come to be. Anna Tasiemska learned about that curiosity shortly before her grandfather’s identification.

She first heard about him as a teenager, when a more distant relative told her that her grandmother’s husband, whom she regarded as her grandfather, was not her biological ancestor. Her mother confirmed that information, showed her a family photo album, and told her about Władysław. He could speak five languages and was extremely intelligent. If he were alive, he would have



Anna Tasiemska holding the identification certificate of her grandfather Władysław Borowiec, Warsaw, August 2013 (photo by Piotr Zycieński).





Władysław Borowiec with his daughter Barbara by a board of the British occupation zone in Berlin (photo from Anna Tasiemska's collection).



Władysław Borowiec with his daughter Barbara (photo from Anna Tasiemska's collection).

found his family in every corner of the world, so he must be dead. Władysław disappeared in 1947 when Barbara was six years old. The girl was then evicted with her mother Antonina as the court ordered forfeiture of the convict's property. The widow was unable to find a job due to negative references and died at the age of 47.

When in 1992 the court declared that Władysław Borowiec had acted for the benefit of Polish independence, Anna Tasiemska (already an adult then) and her mother tried to learn where their father and grandfather had been buried, suspecting the cemetery in the Warsaw quarter of Służew. The women were denied access to the investigation files on account of their still being confidential.



Władysław Borowiec with his wife Antonina and daughter Barbara, Berlin, 1945 (photo from Anna Tasiemska's collection).

On 23 February 1991 the Polish Parliament passed an Act nullifying the sentences passed on those repressed for their pro-independence activity. A part of the Act reads: "All decisions given by Polish law enforcement authorities, the judiciary, or the extrajudicial organs since the beginning of their activity on Polish territory on 1 January 1944 until 31 December 1956 [after the 2007 amendment, until 31 December 1989 – K.W.] are hereby nullified provided that the acts the defendants were charged with or which were attributed to them were connected with activity for the benefit of Polish independence or if the decision was given as a result of such activity [...]."

As late as in 2010 Anna found her grandfather's surname on the Internet and learned that it was inscribed on the monument in the 'soldiers' field' in Powązki. Two years later she heard in the media that the families of the victims probably buried there were requested to submit their DNA samples. She did

not hesitate even for a moment to obtain it from her seriously ill mother. Anna also applied to the IPN for access to the documents regarding her grandfather.

“I received photocopies of some of them and I read them at home for two weeks nonstop. I was imagining that investigation. My grandfather’s testimony during the interrogations was often interrupted, which means that he must have been tortured all the time. At one point he said, ‘Just don’t beat me anymore.’ And this request was recorded in the report,” said Anna Tasiemska during her conversation with Agnieszka Łuczak published in the IPN monthly, *Pamięć.pl*.

Similarly to the remains of Władysław Borowiec, the skeleton of Major Hieronim Dekutowski ‘Zapora’ was found on the bottom of an eight person-pit – the same one that held the remains of his two subordinates identified earlier: Stanisław Łukasik and Tadeusz Pelak. The scientists suspected that one of the eight bodies in that pit would be Dekutowski, but they could not announce their suspicions before running genetic tests. Their suspicions found sufficient confirmation only after the exhumation of Hieronim Dekutowski’s parents and obtainment of their DNA samples.



Repossession and War Reparations Office ID (photo from Anna Tasiemska’s collection).



**Hieronim Dekutowski** (1918–1949), ‘Zapora’, ‘Odra’, ‘Stary’; special forces paratrooper, Major, officer of the AK, DSZ, and WiN. Volunteer in the 1939 defensive war. Fought in France in the ranks of the Second Rifle Division. After the French capitulation he was evacuated to Great Britain. In early March 1943 sworn in as a special forces paratrooper, codenames ‘Zapora’ and ‘Odra’. In September 1943 deployed to Poland and promoted to reserve Second Lieutenant by the Commander-in-Chief. Commanded a company in the Ninth Infantry Regiment of the Zamość AK Inspector-

ate and then a Kedyw sabotage detachment in the Lublin–Puławy AK Regional Inspectorate. Became the commander of the First Company of the Eighth Infantry Regiment of the AK Legions within the framework of the Armed Forces Reinstatement plan. Between January and July 1944 conducted scores of combat operations in the Lublin AK District. During Operation Tempest protected the District's command staff. In August made a failed attempt to reach the capital and aid the insurgents. In early 1945, following a decision of the Lublin AK District Command, he concentrated soldiers in danger of arrest and conducted numerous retaliation operations against the NKVD troops and the communist authorities. Promoted by the DSZ command to Captain and by the WiN command to Major. In June 1945 became the commander of all the forest detachments in the Lublin DSZ Inspectorate. In charge of sabotage. Conducted operations against the repression apparatus. The group he commanded consisted of two to three hundred partisans. After the amnesty announced by the communists in the summer of 1945 he disbanded the group and, leading about a dozen of his companions, tried to reach the American occupation zone in Germany through Czechoslovakia. Returned after the failure of that operation and resumed command of the reactivated group. Until the amnesty in February 1947 it conducted numerous sabotage and self-defence operations in the Lublin, Rzeszów, and Kielce provinces. Discontinued the combat operations following the amnesty announced by the communists and came out in June 1947. In danger of arrest, he tried to flee from the country but was apprehended in Nysa on 16 September 1947 by functionaries of the local state security office in Katowice. Subjected to a cruel investigation in the state security's central prison on Rakowiecka Street in Warsaw. Found guilty by the Warsaw Regional Court Martial, he received seven death sentences on 15 November 1948. President Bolesław Bierut did not use his power of pardon. Before the execution made one final failed attempt to escape from the prison cell. Executed on 7 March 1949 in the same prison. Posthumously decorated with the Military Order of Virtuti Militari (1964).

Source: [www.pozzukiwania.ipn.gov.pl](http://www.pozzukiwania.ipn.gov.pl)

“Today we already know that his casket was the first one escorted from the ‘soldiers’ field’. We can say that Major Dekutowski symbolically resumed command of his detachment, but not to lead it to combat but to lead them out of these pits of disgrace and death,” says Krzysztof Szwaagrzyk.

Among those collecting the identification certificate is Dekutowski's niece, Grażyna Chojecka. Born seven years after her uncle's murder, she

could not meet him. Grażyna's grandmother, that is Dekutowski's sister, who was 14 years his senior, did not say much about him. Grażyna remembers only one story: two-year-old Heniek (his pet name used in the family) went down with a serious case of strep throat and had a fever of 40 degrees Celsius. The family was afraid that the child would not survive. Years later Ms. Grażyna heard from her grandmother that it would have been better if the boy had not lived then or if he had died during the war, because then he would have been deemed a hero and would have avoided the brutal investigation and being called a bandit, which he did not deserve.

Of course, nobody knew where Hieronim had been buried. Some suspected the Warsaw quarter of Służew. There were also rumours that he might have been poured over with lime and that there would be no trace of him. The family tried to collect as much information about their exceptional relative as possible. Once in the late 1980s Ms. Grażyna heard from the husband of her cousin, who was related to Hieronim in the same way as she was, that "one day children would learn about 'Zapora' in school."

"'Wishful thinking,' I thought to myself then," recalls Chojecka years later. "And he also boasted that his seven-year-old son knew everything about Dekutowski."

More or less at that time, in the mid-1980s, Jędrzej Tucholski published his book *Cichociemni* (special force paratroopers). For Chojecka it was a signal that Dekutowski was indeed known not only in his family, that others knew about him and had materials on him. She felt comforted for she had begun looking for signs of Dekutowski's heroism in the public space. The discrepancy between the family stories and the official communist version of history bothered her.



Hieronim Dekutowski with his friends, Tarnobrzeg, 1937 (photo from the family collection).



At first she found her uncle's surname on the plaque commemorating special forces paratroopers in the St Hyacinth church in Warsaw. Her aunt took her there as early as in the 1970s. Later, already in the 1990s, she discovered his surname on the plaque on the wall of the prison on Rakowiecka Street devoted to the heroes executed there. Nevertheless, she still felt that Dekutowski was largely unknown and she wondered why that was so. It was with great relief and satisfaction that she responded to the unambiguously positive reaction of Krzysztof Szwagrzyk to her grandfather's surname when she came to the 'soldiers' field' to submit her DNA sample after learning from the media about the search. She took it as a confirmation that her uncle was a well-known hero.

"When I saw the 'soldiers' field' I could not comprehend how they had managed to bury so many bodies in such a small area. I no longer wonder why the exhumations began so late. I think that it is because in the early 1990s the witnesses and perpetrators of that crime were still alive. And that delay was a way to protect the latter," claims Grażyna Chojecka.



Hieronim Dekutowski, Tarnobrzeg, 1930s  
(photo from the family collection).



Major Hieronim Dekutowski 'Zapora'  
(photo from the AIPN).





**Henryk Borowy-Borowski** (1913–1951), 'Trzmiel', Lieutenant, Vilna AK District Command officer, lawyer; pseudonym: Henryk Syczyński. Completed a course for reserve officer cadets in Grodno. Took part in the 1939 defensive war as a cadet and Platoon Leader. During 1942–1944 a soldier of the Vilna AK District, where he served in an espionage group codename 'Cecylia' organised to counteract the Sovietisation of the Polish

territories. In July 1944 managed to avoid arrest by the Soviet troops and deportation into the interior of the USSR. In the spring of 1945 co-organised the transfer of soldiers of the former Vilna AK District to the west. Then became a member of the exterritorial Vilna AK District command active within the post-Yalta borders of Poland; counterintelligence cell director. Arrested on 28 June 1948. Sentenced to death on 2 November 1950 by the Warsaw Regional Court Martial with Major Zygmunt Szendzielarz 'Łupaszka', Lieutenant Lucjan Minkiewicz 'Wiktor', and Lieutenant Colonel Antoni Olechnowicz 'Pohorecki'. Executed in the prison on Rakowiecka Street in Warsaw on 8 February 1951. Decorated with the Cross of Valour.

Source: [www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl](http://www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl)



**Zygmunt Szendzielarz** (1910–1951), 'Łupaszka', Major and officer in the WP, commander of the Fifth Vilna AK Brigade and partisan detachments of the exterritorial Vilna AK District and then of its Draft Centre.

Having graduated from the cavalry officer cadet school in Grudziądz in 1934, he was assigned to the Fourth Cavalry Regiment in Vilna. In the 1939 September Campaign fought as a Lieutenant in the Fourth Regiment of the Vilna Cavalry Brigade. After failed attempts to reach the West under an assumed surname he returned to his hometown Vilna. Since 1940 involved in formation of underground regiment structures, that is, Captain Giedrojć's group. After the AK partisan detachment commanded by Second Lieutenant Antoni Burzyński 'Kmicic' had been destroyed in August 1943 by the Soviet brigade commanded by Fiodor Markow, Szendzielarz reinstated that unit, which from then on was called the Fifth Vilna AK Brigade or the Death Brigade. With the consent of the district

command the Fifth Vilna AK Brigade did not participate in the 1944 Vilna Campaign. Divided into small groups, it moved west to then reunite in the Augustów Forest. In August 1944 the 20–40 soldiers who managed to get through reunited under the command of Szendzielarz and subordinated to the Białystok AK District Command. Reinstated in April 1945 in the Białystok region, the Fifth Brigade had 250 soldiers in August 1945. It conducted a few dozen successful operations against the NKVD, state security, MO, and KBW. In September 1945 the Brigade was demobilised as per order of the DSZ command. Zygmunt Szendzielarz reinstated it in April 1946 in northern Poland, now operating within the framework of the extritorial Vilna AK District. In the autumn of 1946 Szendzielarz returned to the Białystok Province with the group commanded by Second Lieutenant Henryk Wieliczko 'Lufa' and joined the Sixth Vilna AK Brigade commanded by Lieutenant Lucjan Minkiewicz 'Wiktor' and then by Second Lieutenant Władysław Łukasiuk 'Młot'. In hiding until the spring of 1947. Arrested on 30 June 1948 in Osielec in the Polish Tatra Mountains by state security functionaries. After a long investigation sentenced to death on 30 November 1950 by the Regional Court Martial in Warsaw. President Bolesław Bierut did not use his power of pardon. Executed on 8 February 1951 in the prison on Rakowiecka Street in Warsaw. Decorated with the *Virtuti Militari* Cross Fifth Class.

Source: [www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl](http://www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl)

Two of the identified soldiers whose discovery was announced on 22 August 2013 were found under the asphalt lane laid out in the early 1980s. They are Henryk Borowy-Borowski, who lay on the bottom of a four-person pit, and Zygmunt Szendzielarz 'Łupaszka'. Their remains were thrown in face down. The examination of Szendzielarz's skull showed that the executioner shot from above, with the entry bullet hole on the right side of the forehead.

Despite that shocking sight Lidia Lwow-Eberle 'Lala', Szendzielarz's occupation period fiancée, says only that she is happy that he has been found.

Since their last meeting in prison two weeks before his execution, she has not thought about trying to find the resting place of her former fiancé and commander. Lidia inquired about it back in prison but received no answer. She was released in 1956. Initially, it was supposed to be just a three-month leave, but her parents managed to convince the court to reduce her sentence. The time Lidia spent in detention was counted towards her



Lidia Lwow-Eberle during the ceremony of handing out the identification certificates.

prison sentence and consequently she never returned to prison. Following Szendzielarz's instructions, she passed entry exams and was admitted to archaeology at the age of 37. But the difference of almost two decades did not hinder her contacts with other students. In her fifth year she married a boy who was three years her senior in terms of years of studies, but in fact was... 15 years younger. They have a daughter.



**Zygfryd Kuliński** (1924–1950), 'Albin', farmer, soldier of the Home Army Resistance Movement (ROAK) and the NSW. Joined the underground ROAK structures after the end of the German occupation. Served in the detachment of Lieutenant Franciszek Majewski 'Stony'. On 19 November 1947 joined the structures of the Eleventh NSZ Operational Group. Assigned to the detachment commanded by Wiktor Stryjewski 'Cacko'. During 1946–1949 participated in a number of attacks on state security and MO posts. Apprehended on 8 February 1949 in Gałki (Płock district) as a result of a roundup organised by MO and state security function-

aries from Płock, Płońsk, and Sierpc, and KBW soldiers. Wounded, he was transferred to Warsaw and subjected to a brutal investigation. Sentenced to death on 29 September 1949 by the Warsaw Regional Court Martial. The Supreme Court Martial upheld the sentence on 7 February 1950. President Bolesław Bierut did not use his power of pardon. Executed on 29 March 1950 in the prison on Rakowiecka Street in Warsaw with other partisans from 'Cacko's detachment: Wacław Michalski 'Gałzka', Seweryn Oryl 'Kanciasty', Stanisław Konczyński 'Kunda' and Karol Rakoczy 'Bystry'.

Source: [www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl](http://www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl)



**Józef Łukaszewicz** (1929–1949), 'Walek', 'Kruk', NSZ soldier. Attended the Leopold Lis-Kula lower and upper secondary schools in the Warsaw quarter of Praga, where in December 1947 he co-organised an anti-communist youth organisation. From mid-March 1948 served in the Mrozy NSZ Region structures as a sergeant in the detachment commanded by Zygmunt Rzeźkiewicz 'Grot', 'Parabelka', and then by Zygmunt Jezierski 'Orzeł', which conducted several combat operations against the state security and KBW groups in the Mińsk Mazowiecki district. Apprehended on 4 June 1948 in Grodzisk Mazowiecki as a result of a roundup organised by state security and KBW functionaries. Sentenced to death on 28 February 1949 by the Warsaw Regional Court Martial. Executed on 14 May 1940 in the prison on Rakowiecka Street in Warsaw with two other soldiers from 'Orzeł's detachment: Edward Markosik 'Wichura' and Czesław Gałzka 'Bystry'.

Source: [www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl](http://www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl)



**Henryk Pawłowski** (1925–1949), 'Henryk Orłowski', 'Długi', AK soldier, messenger of the Polish Government in Exile. During the war served in the Twenty Sixth AK Infantry Regiment as a team leader in the rank of a cadet and Platoon Leader. In July 1944 forcibly incorporated into the Red Army with the whole detachment, and then sent to an aviation school in Kraśnik. In No-

vember 1944 deported to penal a coal mine in the USSR for spreading anti-Soviet propaganda in the army ranks. Having returned to the country, in the first half of 1946 crossed the Polish-German border near Szczecin and reached the British occupation zone, where he established contact with Jerzy Rübenauber, a member of the Delegate's Office of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Polish Government in Exile. Between February 1946 and May 1947 as such was courier to the Polish Government in Exile. Often carried reports across the Polish-German border. Stayed, for instance, in Szczecin, Cracow, and Jelenia Góra. Arrested twice by the provincial state security office in Szczecin. In January 1948 released for lack of evidence. On 25 February 1948 apprehended again and handed over to the Warsaw state security office. On 18 October 1948 the Warsaw Regional Court Martial found him guilty of espionage for the Polish Government in Exile and sentenced him to death. The Supreme Court Martial upheld the sentence on 7 January 1949. President Bolesław Bierut did not use his power of pardon. Executed on 3 February 1949 in the prison on Rakowiecka Street in Warsaw.

Source: [www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl](http://www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl)



**Ryszard Widelski** (1913–1949), 'Irydion', 'Wiara', 'Wiesia', 'Władysław', 'Żbik', AK and WiN soldier. During the German occupation a platoon commander in the Praga AK Area. In 1945 came out before the state security and then resumed his underground activity. WiN soldier since December 1945. Since mid-1946 directed an intelligence network of the Central Area and then of the Fourth Main Directorate of the WiN in Warsaw, codenames 'Syrena' and 'Wisła'. Close co-worker of Władysław Jedliński 'Marta' – deputy chief of the Information Section of the Fourth Main Directorate of the WiN. Arrested on 10 February 1948 in Warsaw. Sentenced to death on 27 October 1948 by the Warsaw Regional Court Martial. The Supreme Court Martial upheld the sentence on 14 January 1949. President Bolesław Bierut did not use his power of pardon. Executed on 28 January 1949 in the prison on Rakowiecka Street in Warsaw.

Source: [www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl](http://www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl)



**Wacław Walicki** (1903–1949), '111', 'Druh Michał', 'Pan Michał', 'Tesarro'; Lieutenant, officer of the Vilna AK District Command, teacher. Pseudonym: Wacław Lurdecki. In the ZWZ/AK underground since 1939 as an intelligence officer of Quarter 'D' of the underground Garrison of the City of Vilna and then an information officer of the staff of Inspectorate 'A' and the partisan group commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Antoni Olechnowicz 'Pohorecki'. Arrested by the Soviets in July 1944 and detained in the Lukiškės (Łukiszki) prison, from where he was released in May 1945. Resumed his underground activity and beginning with October 1945 began to reinstate the structures of the exterritorial Vilna AK District with Olechnowicz, initially as his aide-de-camp and then deputy. Within the framework of an operation of the Vilna AK District Draft Centre formed his own espionage network consisting of Vilna youth. Arrested on 23 June 1948 in Szczawno-Zdrój during Operation X conducted in entire Poland against the Vilna underground. The investigation conducted by state security functionaries concluded on 8 October 1949 with his death sentence passed by the Warsaw Regional Court Martial. On 30 November 1949 the sentence was upheld the Supreme Court Martial. President Bolesław Bierut did not use his power of pardon. Executed on 22 December 1949 in the prison on Rakowiecka Street in Warsaw.

Source: [www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl](http://www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl)

The August conference has been the last such meeting at the IPN Education Centre. The next one held on 28 February 2014 has a much more official character, which, in the opinion of many participants, finally matches the event's importance. The names of the next identified men – that time as many as 12 – are announced at the Belweder Palace in the presence of the President.

This is how Bronisław Komorowski, in 1990 the Vice Minister of National Defence and a member of the honorary committee for construction of the monument to the victims of Stalinism executed in the prison on Rakowiecka Street, remembers the unveiling of that symbolic wall:

“I remember those moments of great emotion when that monument was erected on the threshold of free Poland, even though it remained uncertain whether it stood in the right place. Its unveiling took place in the presence of the contemporary Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki, the first



non-communist one. The ceremony was organised by Polish Army soldiers, who thus found their path to the full tradition and participation in the tragic history of our nation, who were trying to show that they were definitely a part of the same difficult though shared history. I can also remember those surprised looks, those thoughts and whispers when we looked round the monument in the ‘soldiers’ field’ in Powązki where we could see much later graves from an entirely different reality. Some already regarded it strange that they stood in the putative burial place of those executed or killed in the state security prison. We were already appreciating that painful, extremely difficult truth.”

President Komorowski stresses that after 25 years of freedom we have become certain that a quarter of a century earlier the monument was erected in the right place.

“I am firmly convinced that we must strive together for completion of the exhumations and the identification. With full awareness of how complicated this situation is, with maximal sensitivity, caution, and gentleness, the process of the extraction and then identification of the bodies must be brought to an end. This is our priority,” stresses the President.

IPN Chairman Łukasz Kamiński adds that one of the most difficult problems in facing the legacy of the communist system is its criminal heritage:

“Over the years it seemed that the only thing we could do was to describe the period of the mass repressions, symbolically commemorate the victims, erect monuments, and put the handful of living perpetrators on trial. Today we know that it is possible to do more. For more than two years, with a joint effort of many institutions and individuals and using the opportunities provided by many fields of science, we have been proving that it is possible not only to find the remains of the victims, but also to identify them and then give them back their names and surnames, contrary to the perpetrators’ intentions. Thus way we are fulfilling our basic obligation towards the victims and their relatives. I believe that at the same time we are strengthening the foundations of the Republic of Poland: the foundation of justice and memory of those who sacrificed their own lives in defence of the Republic of Poland.”

The IPN Chairman reminds us that there is still a lot to do: aside from completing the exhumations in the ‘soldiers’ field’ we must examine many similar places in different parts of Poland.

“We shall not rest until we exhaust every possibility to find and identify the remains of our heroes, to give them a decent burial, and to reinstate their memory among Poles,” assures Łukasz Kamiński.

Doctors Andrzej Ossowski and Krzysztof Szwagrzyk read out the identified men’s names: **Jan Czeredys, Adam Gajdek, Roman Groński, Aleksander Adam Kita, Jerzy Miatkowski, Stanisław Mieszkowski, Antoni Olechnowicz, Marian Orlik, Zbigniew Przybyszewski, Karol Rakoczy, Edmund Tudruj, and Arkadiusz Wasilewski.**



Regina Litke, Major Jan Czeredys’ daughter, collecting her father’s identification certificate (photo by Piotr Życieński).

Professor Szwagrzyk presents the pictures taken during the excavations explaining where the individual remains were found. One third of those whose identification is announced on 28 February 2014 were subordinates of Major Hieronim Dekutowski ‘Zapora’: Roman Groński, Jerzy Miatkowski, Edmund Tudruj, and Arkadiusz Wasilewski. They were found in an eight-person pit – the same one as their commander’s body had been thrown in. So we already know the surnames of seven of the eight people thrown in that pit.



Józef Olechnowicz during the ceremony of the presentation of identification certificates at the Belweder Palace (photo by Piotr Życieński).



**Roman Groński** (1926–1949), 'Żbik', WiN Lieutenant. Connected with the Lublin region since early childhood. Came from Kraśnik. In hiding since November 1943 to avoid deportation to forced labour in Germany. In March 1944 joined Kedyw's detachment commanded by Lieutenant Hieronim Dekutowski 'Zapora'. Participated in all combat operations of the detachment until July 1944. Fought in Operation Tempest. Disarmed by the Soviets. In October 1944 re-joined the ranks of Dekutowski's detachment. Covered the entire combat trail until the summer of 1945. Exposed in August 1945. Did not cease his activity. After Dekutowski's return from Czechoslovakia re-joined his detachment. In June 1946 became a gendarmerie patrol commander, countered common banditry.

Following Lieutenant Michał Szeremicki 'Miś's death assumed command of his platoon. Did not come out. Apprehended in Nysa by the state security on 16 September 1947 during an attempt to flee to the West with Major Hieronim Dekutowski 'Zapora'. Sentenced to death on 15 November 1948 by the Warsaw Regional Court Martial. Executed in the prison on Rakowiecka Street in Warsaw on 7 March 1949.

Source: [www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl](http://www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl)



**Jerzy Miatkowski** (1923–1949), 'Zawada', AK soldier, WiN Second Lieutenant. Came from Jabłonna near Warsaw. Joined the AK in 1943. Warsaw Uprising participant. After its failure taken captive by the Germans. Liberated by American troops. After his return to Poland in January 1946 he joined the ranks of the detachment commanded by Major Hieronim Dekutowski 'Zapora'. Served in Lieutenant Jan Szaliłow 'Renek's patrol. Less than six months later promoted to Second Lieutenant and became Major Dekutowski's aide-de-camp. In the spring of 1947 came out in connection with the amnesty announced by the communist authorities and returned to the capital. Fearing arrest, he decided to leave the country with his former commander. Apprehended on 15 September 1947 in Nysa with Major Dekutowski and his closest co-workers. Sentenced to death on 15 November 1948 by the Warsaw Regional Court Martial. Executed in the prison on Rakowiecka Street in Warsaw on 7 March 1949. Decorated with the Cross of Valour.

Na podstawie: [www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl](http://www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl)



**Edmund Tudruj** (1923–1949), 'Mundek', AK and WiN Lieutenant. Connected with the Lublin region since early childhood. Came from the vicinity of Lublin. In the AK since 1943. Completed an underground officer cadet school training. Since 1944 served in the detachment commanded by Sergeant Stanisław Łukasik 'Ryś'. During Operation Tempest disarmed with his detachment

by the Soviets near Polanówka. Returned to the area where he grew up. In October 1944 apprehended there by NKVD functionaries. Deported to the camp in Borovichi (Borowicze) in the interior of the USSR, from where he returned in March 1946. Started working and continued his education but in May 1946 re-joined the detachment commanded by Captain Łukasik, initially as a provisions officer and then deputy commander of one of the detachment's patrols. Did not come out. Went to western Poland in May 1947. Pursued by functionaries of the communist repression apparatus, he often changed his place of residence. In the end decided to leave the country with Major Dekutowski, Captain Łukasik, and others. On 16 September 1947 the men were arrested in Nysa by state security functionaries. Sentenced to death on 15 November 1948 by the Warsaw Regional Court Martial. Executed in the Mokotów prison on 7 March 1949 with Major Dekutowski and five other companions. Decorated with the Cross of Valour.

Source: [www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl](http://www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl).



**Arkadiusz Wasilewski** (1925–1949), 'Biały', AK and WiN Lieutenant. Came from Sterdyń in Podlasie. Joined the AK in 1943 after escaping forced labour to which we had been sent after the German invasion of Poland in 1939. Provided hiding to a woman of Jewish origin, whose life was in danger due to the ethnic policy of the German occupier. In 1943 joined a partisan detachment in the Sokotów Podlaski AK Area and then the

detachment commanded by Captain Stanisław Łokuciewski 'Mały' in the Lublin region. After the Soviet invasion of Poland volunteered to the army. Assigned to Internal Troops – a formation established to liquidate the anti-communist armed underground. Completed a course at the Internal Troops Training Centre. Deserted in May 1945 and joined the group commanded by Major Hieronim Dekutowski 'Zapora' in the Lublin region. In August 1945 took advantage of the amnesty announced by the communist authorities and came out. Arrested by state security functionaries in December for cooperation with the underground. Brutally interrogated at the Lublin Castle, he did not confess to the activity he had been accused of. Released from prison in October 1946, he re-joined Major Dekutowski's group. Served in Lieutenant Jan Szaliłow 'Renek's patrol until August 1947. Then made a failed attempt to go to

the West. Arrested at a contact point in Nysa with his brothers-in-arms. Sentenced to death on 15 November 1948 by the Warsaw Regional Court Martial. Executed in the prison on Rakowiecka Street in Warsaw on 7 March 1949.

Source: [www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl](http://www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl)

The youngest one, Karol Rakoczy, was thrown into a five-person pit near the monument to victims of Stalinism. Next to it was the burial pit of Adam Gajdek. The monument was disassembled for the purpose of the excavations. The photographs presented by Professor Szwagrzyk show only its foundations.

“They are very shallow,” points out the Professor. “Today we know that it was no accident as there were remains underneath.”



**Karol Rakoczy** (1928–1950), soldier of the ROAK and then of the NSZ. In the spring of 1946, as a 16-year-old, joined the detachment of the ‘Mewa’ ROAK Area commanded by Second Lieutenant Tadeusz Kossobudzki ‘Czarny’ and then Lieutenant Franciszek Majewski ‘Słony’. In October 1947 he was subordinated with the detachment to the NSZ Operational Group commanded by Lieutenant Stefan Bronarski ‘Liść’ and operating

in north-western Mazovia. Arrested after a skirmish with a state security-KBW operational group near Sinogóra in the Mława county. Shot in the spine, he lost the use of his legs. Sentenced to death on 29 September 1949 by the Warsaw Regional Court Martial. Executed in the prison on Rakowiecka Street in Warsaw on 29 March 1950.

Karol Rakoczy’s parents were also pro-independence activists. His father Władysław, a participant of the Polish-Soviet War of 1920 and the 1939 September Campaign and an AK soldier, was arrested in 1947. He was summarily sentenced to death by the Bydgoszcz Regional Court Martial but then the sentence was changed into life imprisonment. Karol’s mother, Władysława, an AK soldier, was also arrested in 1947. She was sentenced by the Bydgoszcz Regional Court Martial to life imprisonment.

Source: [www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl](http://www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl)





**Adam Gajdek** (1915–1949), ‘Agata’, ‘Antek’, ‘Olek’; non-commissioned officer in the WP, soldier of the ZWZ, AK, and WiN. Graduated from the Infantry Cadet School for Minors in Nisko. During the German invasion of Poland in September 1939 fought as a corporal in the Third Rifle Regiment in Bielsko. Messenger of the ZWZ since 1940 in the Rzeszów region, then of the AK. At the end of the German occupation an economics clerk in the Rzeszów AK Area. In October 1944 mobilised to the People’s Polish Army, initially in the Regional Recruitment Command in Rzeszów and then in the Provincial Recruitment Command in Katowice. All that time continued his pro-independence activity within the framework of the ‘NIE’ Organisation, the DSZ, and then the WiN. Fearing arrest, he deserted in early September 1946 and went to Cracow, where he hid as Adam Wilanowski. Member of the Fourth Main Directorate of the WiN. In April 1947 became chief of the intelligence network codename ‘Instytut Bakteriologiczny’. Arrested on 17 October 1947 in Cracow. After a few weeks of a brutal investigation transferred to the seat of the Ministry of Public Security (MBP) in Warsaw. Sentenced to death on 23 October 1948 by the Warsaw Regional Court Martial. Executed in the prison on Rakowiecka Street in Warsaw on 14 January 1949.

Source: [www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl](http://www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl)

Lieutenant Colonel Antoni Olechnowicz was found in the same four-person pit as Major Dekutowski and Henryk Borowy-Borowski. The perpetrators threw Olechnowicz’s body on top of Major Szendzielarz, also face down. Lieutenant Colonels Aleksander Kita and Marian Orlik were treated similarly, but the two were found lying next to each other. Major Jan Czeredys was the only one of these identified men buried in a casket. Next to him, in a three-person pit, were the remains of two Commodores: Stanisław Mieszkowski and Zbigniew Przybyszewski. Olechnowicz, Kita, Orlik, and the Commodores were buried under the asphalt lane.

Now Witold Mieszkowski is certain that when a year and a half earlier, in August 2012, he gave a speech during the ceremony of escorting the exhumed remains he was wrong by only a few metres when he said that he might have been standing on his own father’s grave.



**Jan Czeredys** (1912–1948), WP Major. Born in Turów near Warsaw. Before the German invasion of Poland in September 1939 graduated from the State Construction School in Warsaw. In 1937 made Second Lieutenant of the reserve. In September 1939 defended the Modlin fortress. During the German occupation in the underground AK structures. In the second half of 1944 joined the People's Polish Army. Became chief of the operational section in the Housing and Construction Department of the Ministry of National Defence. In 1948 fell victim to political purges in the army in connection to the 'quartermaster affair'. Arrested on 13 February with Colonel Jerzy Broński and Lieutenant Colonel Stefan Długołęcki. Falsely charged with involvement in the "private companies' monopoly on deliveries to the army." Sentenced to death on 3 November 1948 by the Supreme Court Martial. Executed in the prison on Rakowiecka Street in Warsaw on 28 December 1948.

Source: [www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl](http://www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl)



**Antoni Olechnowicz** (1905–1951), 'Krzysztof', 'Kurkowski', 'Lawicz', 'Pohorecki', 'Meteor', trained Captain in the WP, AK Lieutenant Colonel, the last commander of the Vilna AK District and its Draft Centre. In 1930 completed the Infantry Officer Cadet School course in Ostrów Mazowiecka in the rank of a Second Lieutenant, after which he began to study at the Political Studies School in Vilna. During 1935–1937 studied at the Military Academy in Warsaw, from which he graduated in the rank of a trained Captain. In September 1939 participated in the defence of Poland as the quartermaster of the Thirty-Third Infantry Division. In early October 1939 taken captive by the Soviets but soon escaped. Having returned to Vilna, he immediately began his pro-independence activity within the structures of the Government's Commissariat, where he became the chief of its military department. Since December 1939 in the SZP and then in the Vilna ZWZ District Command as Department I (operational) chief. Between July 1941 and mid-1942 was the Garrison of the City of Vilna commander. Then transferred to the position of inspector of Inspectorate 'A' (encompassing Vilna and the Vilna-Troki

county). In April 1944 became commander of Group I of the AK, which he commanded during Operation Gate of Dawn.

One of the few Vilna AK officers to avoid arrest by the NKVD in July 1944. Continued his pro-independence activity in the reinstated Vilna District Commands, first as Department I chief and then chief of staff and deputy commander. Vilna District commander since late March 1945. That summer he skilfully conducted the evacuation of the Vilna Command to central Poland. Did not subordinate to the DSZ and continued his independent pro-independence activity as commander of the exterritorial Vilna AK District. In August 1945 established direct contact with the Commander-in-Chief's staff. In December 1945 subordinated the partisan detachments commanded by Major Zygmunt Szendzielarz 'Łupaszka' (Fifth and Sixth Vilna AK Brigades). In February 1947 reached Paris, from where he returned to the country after receiving instructions. Continued his pro-independence activity commanding the cadres of Vilna AK District Draft Centre. Arrested on 26 June 1948 in Wrocław as a result of the state security's Operation X against the soldiers of the pro-independence underground from the Vilna region. Sentenced to death on 2 November 1950 by the Warsaw Regional Court Martial. Executed in the prison on Rakowiecka Street in Warsaw on 8 February 1951.

Source: [www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl](http://www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl)



**Aleksander Adam Kita** (1912–1952), WP Lieutenant Colonel. Born in Annopol. Connected with the Lublin region since early childhood. In 1932 graduated from a secondary school in Lublin and then began to study at the Infantry Officer Cadet School in Ostrowia-Komorowo. On 15 October 1935 promoted Second Lieutenant and on 19 March 1939 Lieutenant. In the 1939 September Campaign commanded an HMG Company

of the First Battalion of the Forty Fifth Infantry Regiment of the Thirteenth Infantry Division of the 'Prussia' Army. Fought against German armoured troops at Tomaszów Lubelski. Distinguished himself in the Spata forests and during the battle for a crossing on the River Vistula at Ryczywół when he destroyed two German tanks while covering his retreating division. Taken captive while retreating towards Warsaw. Spent the German

occupation in POW camps, for instance, in the IIC Woldenberg Oflag. Liberated by the Red Army in late January 1945, he returned to his family home. In spring began to work in the School Inspectorate in Toruń. A month later mobilised to the People's Polish Army. Having completed a course for regimental staff chiefs in Rembertów, he was assigned to the Thirty-Ninth Infantry Regiment of the Twelfth Infantry Division, where he served in the regiment's staff. In the spring of 1946 promoted to chief of staff. In early September 1947 transferred to the General Staff of the Polish Army. In 1950 promoted to Lieutenant Colonel. A year later appointed deputy chairman of a sub-commission for the marking out of the Polish-Soviet border. Then assigned to the Officer Auto-Technical School in Piła where he first was a lecturer and then the headmaster. Arrested on 23 May 1952 by officers of the Information Directorate under false charges of participation in a 'conspiracy in the army'. Sentenced to death by the Supreme Court Martial on 8 August 1952. His appeal filed with the Supreme Court Martial and his petition for clemency sent to President Bolesław Bierut were rejected. Executed on 3 December 1952 in the prison on Rakowiecka Street in Warsaw. On 6 April 1956 the Supreme Military Prosecutor's Office revoked the sentence of 8 August 1952.

Source: [www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl](http://www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl)



**Marian Orlik** (1916–1952), WP Lieutenant Colonel. Having completed his secondary education in 1936, he reported to the Infantry Officer Cadet School in Ostrów Mazowiecka. At the beginning of the defensive war in September 1939 Second Lieutenant in the Second Regiment of the First Infantry Division of the Legions. Taken captive in early October. POW until the end of the German occupation. Liberated by the Red Army in January

1945, he returned to his hometown of Szamotuły. Mobilised, in May he discontinued his involvement in the reinstatement of the local secondary school. Having completed the courses at the Infantry Training Centre in Warsaw, he was assigned to the Sixth Infantry Division in Chrzanów. Five months later transferred to the staff of the Sixth Infantry Division, where he was promoted to Major. In September 1947 delegated to the General Staff of the Polish Army. In mid-1951 promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and at the end of the year transferred to the Medical Training Centre in Łódź. His work as a lecturer contributed to his leaving the army in February 1952. Three months later apprehended by officers of

the army counterintelligence (IW) under false charges of participation in a 'conspiracy in the army'. Sentenced to death by the Supreme Court Martial on 8 August 1952. His review complaint and petition for clemency to President Bolesław Bierut were rejected. Executed on 3 December 1952 in the prison on Rakowiecka Street in Warsaw.

Source: [www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl](http://www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl)



**Zbigniew Przybyszewski** (1907–1952), Navy Commodore. Born in Gizewo (Inowrocław district). Graduated from a secondary school in Inowrocław and in 1930 from the Naval Academy in Toruń Promoted to Captain in the spring of 1938, assumed command of the Heliodor Laskowski Battery on the Hel Peninsula, which he skillfully commanded in September 1939, during the German invasion of Poland. His battery was victorious,

for instance, in an exchange of fire with German battleships Schleswig-Holstein and Schlesien. Wounded. In German POW camps until 1945, for instance, in the IIC Woldenberg oflag, from where he made two unsuccessful escape attempts. In late January 1945 liberated by the Red Army. In July mobilised as a lecturer to the Marine Specialists School. In 1946 organised an Independent Division of Coastal Artillery. Appointed commander of the Torpedo Boats Command and then promoted to assistant to the chief of the Main Navy Staff Branch. Arrested on 17 September 1950 by army counterintelligence officers on false charges of espionage. Sentenced to death by the Supreme Court Martial on 21 July 1952. Executed on 16 December 1952 in the prison on Rakowiecka Street in Warsaw.

Source: [www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl](http://www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl)



**Stanisław Mieszkowski** (1903–1952), Navy Commodore. Born into an intelligentsia family. Had four siblings. Associated with Piotrków Trybunalski since early childhood. After the outbreak of World War I, deported with his family to Russia, where he continued his secondary education. Having returned to Poland, he fought as a volunteer in the Polish-Soviet War. Completed his sec-

ondary education and enrolled in the elite Infantry Officer Cadet School in Warsaw, from which he did not graduate. In 1924 enrolled in the Naval Academy, which he graduated from in the rank of a Second Lieutenant. Until 1939 studied to become a navy artillery specialist. Artillery officer aboard *Grom* and *Błyskawica* destroyers. As a specialist he participated in the missions to supervise the construction of ships commissioned by the Polish state, for instance, the destroyers *Grom* and *Błyskawica*. In September 1939 commanded the *Generał Haller* gunboat, participating in the defence of the Polish coast against the German air force. Then on 3 September joined with his crew the troops fighting on the Hel Peninsula until the capitulation on 2 October. In German POW camps throughout the occupation. In January 1945 liberated by the Red Army. Four months later began to serve in the Main Marine Office as the Kołobrzeg harbour captain. In early 1946 transferred to the Navy in Gdynia. Trawler Fleet commander. Then organised the Navy Officer School in the Oksywie quarter of Gdynia (acting commandant of that school). In 1947 became chief of the Main Staff of the Navy (since 1948 in the rank of a Commodore). On 15 November 1949 became Fleet Commander. Arrested on 20 October 1950 by officers of the Navy Information Directorate in Gdynia under false charges of espionage. Sentenced to death by the Supreme Court Martial on 21 July 1952. Executed in the prison on Rakowiecka Street in Warsaw on 16 December 1952.

Source: [www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl](http://www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl)

“For us this is the first day when we finally do not feel second class citizens,” moved, he says to those assembled at the Belweder Palace. “I had sought my father’s body for sixty years. It is difficult for me to speak today but I need to say this: a dreadful thing happened in the ‘soldiers’ field’. Those who have been there at least once can feel that. The pictures do not capture the atmosphere there. I would say that this must be a place of national pride and less so of a tragedy.”

Witold Mieszkowski also comments on the planned third stage of the excavations to be conducted under the 1980s tombstones.

“I shall speak as a pragmatist now. I imagine that those buried there under cover of martial law shall have to be moved from that leased area. And this shall be a responsibility of the capital city and the role of the cemetery management – in order to ensure completion of this third stage, which, as I hope, we shall undertake together.”

At the end he adds:





Witold Mieszkowski with the identification certificate speaking on behalf of the identified victims' families at the Belweder Palace (photo by Piotr Życieński).

“I have come here today with my grandchildren, Commodore Mieszkowski's great-grandchildren. Our joint effort in the ‘soldier's field’ shall be for them. Not for us.”

After the ceremony the families go by coach to the northern outskirts of Warsaw. There, in the cold store of the Northern Cemetery, the remains of their relatives await burial. Those who heard the surnames of their fathers, uncles, or grandfathers at the Belweder Palace can now pay tribute to their loved ones being absolutely certain that these are their remains.

The chapel of the funeral home at the Northern Cemetery is dim. In front of the altar is a row of a dozen small caskets, each with a portrait photograph on it. On the benches sit their tense, moved families. Witold Mieszkowski supportively embraces Commodore Zbigniew Przybysze-

wski's granddaughter. Prelate Father Józef Maj, long-standing parish priest of St Catherine parish in Służew, where there is another communist-era secret burial place, says a short prayer for the murdered victims. He approaches every casket and, bowing to it, sprinkles it with holy water.



Father Józef Maj praying before the caskets with the identified victims' remains (photo by Piotr Życieński).

The families approach the caskets with flowers and some lay a picture with a saint on the lid. This is their first contact with their fathers, uncles, and grandfathers after their death, the first opportunity to touch, caress, or kiss them...

Everybody is waiting for the launch of the third stage of the excavations in section Ł. Many hoped that the works would commence in the spring of 2014, in May or perhaps June. The remains under the 1980s tombstones were to be excavated using a tunnel dug from the side but experts exclude

that method due to possible collapse. Consequently, the tombstones must be removed.

Both the Warsaw authorities, which are in charge of the municipal cemetery, and the Mazowieckie Province Governor, who administers war graves in his subordinate area, deem that the 1980s tombstones cannot be moved under binding rules of law, thus refusing permission for the excavations. Disagreeing with this assessment, the IPN asks the Ministry of Justice for its legal opinion but it upholds the two previous decisions. This calls for an amendment of the law – in July the Chancellery of the Polish President pledges to prepare an appropriate bill.

Meanwhile, the crew led by Professor Szwagrzyk begins working in the previously unexcavated area of the Military Powązki Cemetery without the tombstones. It is early September. The weather could not be better. It is sunny and warm, but not hot. Work hours are scheduled for five days (Tuesday to Saturday) from seven o'clock in the morning until late afternoon – four or five o'clock.

After the second stage there is still a piece of land under the asphalt to excavate. On the second day of the third stage, after removing a fragment of the asphalt and digging a two-metre-deep pit that reaches down to the layer which had never been dug before, it becomes clear that there are no remains in that area.

The excavations are also conducted right by the cemetery's wall, where the archaeologists find caskets lying perpendicularly to the necropolis' border.

“Those are sanitary burials made during 1950–1951, that is, for instance, of unidentified homeless people. This discovery enables us to mark out the border of the prison burials we are looking for with absolute certainty,” explains Professor Szwagrzyk.

In the accessible prison burial area the archaeologists find two more skeletons. Only one of them, found in a one-person hole, which is an exception here, can be removed in its entirety. As for the other one, the archaeologists can remove only the legs and a part of the pelvis, for the upper part of the skeleton is underneath a later tombstone. Consequently, it has to wait until the last stage of the works, when the crew shall be able to move the 1980s tombstones.

“It is clear that the epiphysis of this prisoner's femur was cut off, probably with a mechanical tool,” observes Professor Szwagrzyk. “I think

that this happened in the 1980s. The person preparing the contemporary tombstones found remains protruding from the ground and cut them off. I expect to see more such severed bones under the 1980s tombstones.”

We have yet to wait for the identification of the two people whose skeletons were found in the ‘soldiers’ field’ in September 2014. Meanwhile, 28 September 2014 – three weeks after the end of the excavations and a day after the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the PPP – brings the announcement of the results of the genetic tests of the remains discovered in 2012 and 2013. This time eight heroes are given back their names and surnames: **Julian Czerwiakowski, Bolesław Częścik, Stefan Głowacki, Bolesław Kontrym, Dionizy Sosnowski, Zygmunt Szymanowski, Ludwik Świder, and Aleksander Tomaszewski.** As before, the ceremony is held with the participation of the Polish President, but this time at the Presidential Palace.

President Bronisław Komorowski stresses that secret burials and cover-ups were methods regularly used by the communists, not only in the



President Bronisław Komorowski opening the ceremony of the presentation of the identification certificates (photo by Piotr Zycieński).

‘soldiers’ field’. Today the truth about them is being revealed. In the President’s opinion it is similar to the uncovering of the truth about the Katyn Massacre. This is how he recalls his visit to the Katyn forest in 1989, when he accompanied the contemporary Polish Prime Minister, Tadeusz Mazowiecki:

“We approached the cemetery, which could be seen in the distance. There were Russian soldiers and it was still a place full of hypocrisy – the painful Katyn lie. It was 1989. For me the main source of satisfaction and optimism is that not long ago, while making some evaluations, I concluded that almost everything has changed since then. Almost everything has succeeded. Not everything, though. There are the cemeteries – the one in Katyn, which tells the truth, the Polish truth about that dramatic time, the one in Kharkov, and the one in Bikivnia. But there is no cemetery of the victims from the ‘Belarussian list’. We lack the documents. But we have achieved so much! I thought to myself that what brings most satisfaction is the possibility to participate in the process, which in the end must force all the evil ones to reflect on the fact that truth shall always be revealed, no matter what, even if a hundred years pass, even despite an apparatus of a gigantic lie. Truth can always be brought to light. Not for the purpose of hating someone but to make the world a better and wiser place. This is our obligation. This is our task and I am certain that together we shall succeed,” sums up the President.

IPN chairman Łukasz Kamiński stresses that even though the death pits excavated by the search team hold the shattered remains of the PPP we can look at them in a different way:

“Yes, it is true that we are uncovering the remains of the Polish Underground State heroes, the heroes whom the communists tried to humiliate and erase from our national history. But at the same time we are uncovering foundations. For the history of the Polish Underground State and the people who created it can serve as a foundation to us – the foundation on which we have been building the free and independent Poland for 25 years.”

As always, doctor Krzysztof Szwagrzyk shows the inside story of the exhumations through pictures. This time, most of the identified remains of the heroes were found under the asphalt lane. Dionizy Sosnowski’s skeleton was discovered on the periphery of section Ł, that is, in the square 18 by 18 metres where not long ago stood the monument to the victims of communism.



**Dionizy Sosnowski** (1929–1953), 'Zbyszek' and 'Józef'; completed a radio operator course organised by the WiN Foreign Branch, cadet and Corporal. Came from Goniądz. Graduated from a secondary school in Białystok. In 1948 came to Warsaw and began to study at the Medical Academy, but due to political accusations was soon forced to discontinue his studies. Began to work as an instructor at a training and education centre for children.

In the spring of 1951 selected as a non-member by the communist Union of Polish Youth for the World Festival of Youth in Berlin, which he decided to use as an opportunity to flee to the West. When news of that reached the state security office he was contacted by its agent in June 1951. Sosnowski became a part of Operation Cezary, which consisted in the state security's feigning the activity of the WiN in the country ('Fifth WiN Command'). He was unaware of the provocative character of that organisation. His departure to Berlin was blocked but on the night of 5–6 January 1952 he was smuggled across the 'green' border with Germany. He began a course for radio telegraph operators with elements of sabotage training organised by the WiN Foreign Branch in cooperation with the Polish military authorities in exile and with the help of American instructors. Completed the course in August 1952. On the night of 4–5 November 1952 parachuted into Pomerania with Stefan Skrzyszowski a.k.a. Janusz Patera. After a year promoted by the Polish military authorities in exile to cadet and Corporal of the reserve. The equipment and money brought were appropriated by the 'Fifth WiN Command'.

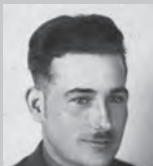
Arrested on 6 December 1952 within the framework of the liquidation of Operation Cezary. Sentenced to death after a show hearing on 18 February 1953 by the Warsaw Regional Court Martial. Executed in the prison on Rakowiecka Street in Warsaw on 15 May 1953. On 18 October 2000, under the Act of 23 February 1991, the District Court Martial in Warsaw revoked the sentence passed on Dionizy Sosnowski, deemed him a victim of the state security's provocation, and declared that his actions were motivated by his willingness to fight for Polish independence. Decorated with the Bronze Cross of Merit with Swords.

Source: [www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl](http://www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl)

The sight of Bolesław Cześćcik's burial pit is particularly shocking. His legs stuck outside the pit. His grave was also in section Ł-I. The remains became intertwined with the roots of a larch planted in the secret burial place probably in the 1960s.



“Our specialists had to cope with that, that is, cut off the root without disturbing the remains,” says Professor Szwagrzyk.



**Bolesław Częścik** (1924–1951), ‘Orlik’; NSZ and NZW soldier. Born in Wola-Józefowo (Krasnosielc municipality, Maków Mazowiecki district). Joined the NSZ during the occupation. After the Soviet invasion of Poland served in a detachment commanded by Roman Dziemiszkievicz ‘Adam’, ‘Pogoda’. Participated in several combat operations in the Ciechanów, Maków Mazowiecki, Ostrołęka, and Pułtusk districts, for instance, in the attack on the local state security jail in Krasnosielc in early May 1945, which freed a few dozen AK and NSZ soldiers.

In 1946, after the destruction of Dziemiszkievicz’s detachment, Częścik joined the detachment of the Special Shock Unit of the Sixteenth NZW District commanded by Józef Kozłowski ‘Las’. On 22 April 1947 came out in Warsaw before the Warsaw state security office. Arrested on 13 September 1950 in Drewnica (Gdańsk district). Sentenced to death on 7 April 1951 by the Warsaw Regional Court Martial during its ex situ session in Pułtusk. President Bolesław Bierut did not use his power of pardon. Executed in the prison on Rakowiecka Street in Warsaw on 10 July 1951.

Source: [www.pozukiwania.ipn.gov.pl](http://www.pozukiwania.ipn.gov.pl)

Fragments of two personal use items – a comb and a toothbrush – were found by Zygmunt Szymanowski’s remains.

“It unusual as most convicts did not have such objects on them,” stresses Krzysztof Szwagrzyk.



**Zygmunt Szymanowski** (1910–1950), ‘Jezierza’, ‘Lis’, ‘Bez’, ‘Cis’, ‘61’; pseudonyms: Antoni Piwowarski, Jan Sadowski; AK Lieutenant, Vilna AK District officer. Born in Motule (Suwałki county). Completed his primary education in Motule and then attended a secondary school in Suwałki. In September 1928 moved to Lvov, where he completed his secondary education in April 1931.

Mobilised in August 1931 and assigned to the Infantry Reserve Officer Cadet School in Cracow. Graduated in 1932 in the rank of a cadet and Platoon Leader and assigned to the Nineteenth Infantry

Regiment in Lvov. Discontinued his active service in September 1932 (in 1935 during army reserve exercises promoted to Second Lieutenant and in January 1939 to Lieutenant).

In 1934 began to study at the Academy of Foreign Trade in Lvov and at the Lvov Polytechnic National University. In June 1939 earned his MA in economics and trade and received a certificate of completion from the Polytechnic. In September 1939 fought at Włocławek, Kutno, Sochaczew, Łódź, and Płock as the commander of a HMG company of the Nineteenth Infantry Regiment of the Fifth Infantry Division. Defended the Modlin Fortress. Wounded twice: at Płock and in Palmiry. Hospitalised in Modlin from 20 September 1939. Taken from there to a POW camp in Działdowo, from where he escaped to Suwałki, where he was arrested again. After another escape settled in the Vilna region and probably became a ZWZ member.

In 1942 became active in the AK as the railway intelligence chief in Vilna. Arrested by the NKVD on 20 September 1944. After an investigation sentenced for his activity in the AK to ten years' imprisonment. Managed to escape on 15 March 1945. In hiding in Vilna, from where he went to Suwałki on 30 April 1945. In September 1947 became active as 'Lis' and 'Bez' in the Vilna AK District Draft Centre by forming an intelligence network – he collected information about the political and economic activity and the public mood. Arrested on 22 June 1948 in Szklarska Poręba within the framework of Operation X, whose purpose was to destroy the Vilna AK District structures. Detained in the Mokotów prison since early July 1948. Sentenced to death on 24 January 1950 by the Warsaw Regional Court Martial. President Bolesław Bierut did not use his power of pardon. Executed in the prison on Rakowiecka Street in Warsaw on 31 May 1950.

Source: [www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl](http://www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl)

The skeletons of Stefan Głowacki and Aleksander Tomaszewski were found in one pit.



**Stefan Głowacki** (1903–1949), 'Smuga', AK Lieutenant, Vilna AK District officer. Born in Lublin. Mobilised in 1924. Served in the Eighth Infantry Regiment of the Legions in Lublin. Remained in the army after the end of his service. Promoted to Second Lieutenant in 1934. Transferred to the Seventeenth Infantry Regiment in Rzeszów. In 1938 promoted to Lieutenant. In the spring of 1939 transferred to the KOP in Augustów.

During the September Campaign fought in the vicinity of Augustów and Suwałki. In November 1939 moved to Vilna, where in 1941 he became active in the AK as a sub-region commander.

In April 1945 left Vilna as a repatriate and arrived in Wrocław. In March 1946 began to cooperate with the Vilna AK District Draft Centre commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Antoni Olechnowicz 'Pohorecki'. Arrested in an ambush in Dębowa Łąka near Leszno on 7 July 1948. Sentenced to death on 8 March 1949 by the Warsaw Regional Court Martial. President Bolesław Bierut did not use his power of pardon. Executed in the prison on Rakowiecka Street in Warsaw on 13 June 1949.

Source: [www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl](http://www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl)



**Aleksander Tomaszewski** (1904–1949), 'Al', 'Bończa', pseudonym: Tomasz Aleksandrowski; AK Captain, Vilna AK District officer. Born in Vilna. In 1926 mobilised to active service in the Eighty Sixth Infantry Regiment in Mołodeczno. Graduated from an officer school in Bydgoszcz in 1932 and was assigned to the Fifth Infantry Regiment stationed in Vilna, where he was a platoon commander with the rank of Lieutenant. During the German

occupation and after the arrival of the Soviets in Vilna was in the structures of the Vilna AK District as the commander of the First Region of Quarter D and Quarter E of the Garrison of the City of Vilna. Reorganised the telecommunications and secured the archives as well as arms and ammunition storerooms.

In late 1945 went to Poland. Initially lived in Jelenia Góra and then in Wrocław. Having contacted Lieutenant Colonel Antoni Olechnowicz, he decided to remain in the underground. Active in the Vilna AK District Draft Centre, where he was in charge of legalisation and military intelligence. Maintained contact with youth groups active in Lower Silesia, Gdańsk, and Łódź. In March 1947 became a member of the staff of the Vilna AK District Command. Directed the intelligence and counterintelligence activity of AK soldiers. His flat in Wrocław served as contact point and storage for some of the Vilna underground's archives.

Arrested on 26 June 1948 with Lieutenant Colonel Olechnowicz by provincial state security functionaries in his flat in Wrocław within the framework of the state security's Operation X conducted in the whole country against soldiers of the Polish pro-independence soldiers from the Vilna region. Detained in the Mokotów prison since early 1948. Sentenced to

death on 20 January 1949 by the Warsaw Regional Court Martial. President Bolesław Bierut did not use his power of pardon. Executed in the prison on Rakowiecka Street in Warsaw on 13 June 1949.

Source: [www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl](http://www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl)

Julian Czerwiakowski, Bolesław Kontrym, and Ludwik Świder were found in the immediate vicinity of the 1980s tombstones. In order to explore their burial pits it was necessary to board their walls to avoid collapse.



**Julian Czerwiakowski** (1911–1953), 'Jurek', 'Jerzy Tarnowski'; soldier of the NSZ, 'NIE', and WiN. Born in Żuromin (Sierpc district). Mobilised in 1932. Served in the Bridge Battalion in Kazuń near Modlin. Associated with the NSZ since 1942. Subordinate of Captain Zygmunt Ojrzyński 'Ostaszewski' – Warsaw NSZ District intelligence chief. As the Warsaw-Centre NSZ intelligence chief organised an observation and intelligence cell.

In the second half of 1943 (August or September) through Ojrzyński's agency began his activity in the 'Start' organisation – Warsaw Branch of the Investigations Office of the State Security Corps, where he was the Warsaw-Centre director. Between April and October 1945 active in 'NIE' and WiN. Arrested on 21 December 1948 by the state security in his Warsaw flat. Sentenced to death on 22 April 1952 by the Provincial Court for the City of Warsaw. The Council of State did not use its power of pardon. Executed in the prison on Rakowiecka Street in Warsaw on 5 January 1953.

Source: [www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl](http://www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl)



**Bolesław Kontrym** (1898–1953), 'Żmudzin', 'Biały', 'Bielski', 'Cichocki'; State Police officer in the Second Republic of Poland, WP Major, special force paratrooper, AK officer. Born at the Zaturce estate (Łuck [Lutsk] district). Came from a family with a pro-independence background – his ancestors fought in the November and January uprisings. In 1909 enrolled in the cadet school in Kiev and then in Yaroslavl. Having joined the

tsarist army in 1915, he was sent to the Carpathian front line, where he commanded a mounted recon detachment in the One Hundred Twenty Seventh and One Hundred Sixtieth infantry regiments. From January 1918 served in the Fifth Cavalry Regiment of the Second Polish Corps in the East. In German captivity after its disarmament. After his escape he reported to the Supreme Command of the Third Polish Military Organisation in Kiev.

Having reached Archangelsk, he fought against the Bolsheviks. Arrested in July 1919 and compelled to serve in the Red Army three months later. During 1919–1920 fought on the Finnish front line. Decorated thrice for valour in combat and sent to study at the General Staff Academy in Moscow. Since February 1922 intelligence officer to the military attaché with the Polish legation in Moscow. Fearing arrest, he illegally returned to Poland in December 1922.

After vetting served in the Border Guard and then, since 1923, in the State Border Police. Until September 1939 held various positions in the State Police, for instance, was director of the Investigations Office in Białystok and director of an investigations department in Vilna.

On 19 September interned in the Kulautuva (Kołotowo) camp near Kaunas, from where he reached France on 10 December 1939 through Estonia, Latvia, Sweden, Norway, and England. Fought at Narvik in the Independent Rifle Brigade. In 1940 reached Great Britain, where from 1941 he served in the First Independent Airborne Brigade. Volunteered to serve in the country and took the AK oath. In April 1942 underwent sabotage and parachuting training within the framework of a course for special force paratroopers. On the night of 1–2 September 1942 dropped onto the 'Rogi' post north-east off Grójec. Assigned to 'Wachlarz'. In March 1943 became the Brześć AK District Kedyw chief and then of the Investigations HQ of the State Security Corps. Organised and commanded the 'Sztafeta-Podkowa' (later renamed 'Podkowa') detachment, which, for instance, carried out executions of informers and Gestapo agents. During the Warsaw Uprising commanded the Fourth Company in the AK group commanded by Major Włodzimierz Zawadzki 'Bartkiewicz' and the tactical area in the Warsaw Centre-North Sub-Area (Królewska Street–Kredytowa Street–Małachowskiego Square). With the establishment of the Warsaw AK Corps on 20 September 1944 he became the commander of the Third Battalion of the Thirty Sixth Infantry Regiment of the Academic League, which was a part of the Twenty Eighth Stefan Okrzeja AK Infantry Division. Wounded four times during the Uprising, including on 4 August during the attack on the Polish Telephone Joint-Stock Company (PAST) building, which he commanded.

After the Uprising interned in different POW camps, including the one in Sandbostel, from where he escaped in April 1945 and then reached the First Armoured Division commanded by General Stanisław Maczek, where he became a company commander. Two years later returned to the Poland and began to work in the Central Board of the State Fermentation Industry in Warsaw.

Arrested on 13 October 1948. Sentenced to death on 26 June 1952 after a four-year investigation by the Provincial Court for the City of Warsaw. The Council of State did not use its power of pardon. Executed in the prison on Rakowiecka Street in Warsaw on 2 January 1953. Rehabilitated on 3 December 1957 by the Provincial Court for the City of Warsaw.

Source: [www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl](http://www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl)



**Ludwik Jan Świder** (1893–1952), 'Johann Puk'; Major, WP career officer. During World War I served in the Austro-Hungarian army. In 1918 joined the Polish Army. Served in the Twenty Sixth Infantry Regiment. Company commander, then also a battalion commander. Fought in the Polish-Soviet War. Wounded in combat. In 1926 transferred to the Twenty Seventh Infantry Regiment in Częstochowa. In 1928 promoted to Major. In 1929 became a battalion commander.

In 1931 transferred to the position of a quartermaster. In 1935 directed the District Recruitment Command in Tarnopol. Deactivated in 1938. In fact worked as the director of a spy ring in the Independent Information Desk of the Fourth Corps District Command in Łódź, where he worked until the outbreak of the war.

In September 1939 interned in Romania with his unit. Since 1941 in German internment camps for Polish officers. After the war in DP camps. In 1949 engaged by Major Franciszek Miszczak 'Stefan Reda' to work in the intelligence centre in Quackenbrück, subordinate to the Polish Government in Exile. In 1950 transferred with his entire post (at that time directed by Major Stanisław Laurentowski 'Stanisław Lorenz') to Barkhausen. In mid-1950 appointed director of the Berlin centre's branch office located in the building of the Association to Aid Poles. At that time used the false surname Johann Puk. In charge of interrogating escapees, recruitment of collaborators, and organization of communications with Poland.



On 23 July 1951 arrested by the Soviet services in Berlin in consultation with the Polish state security. Handed over to the Investigations Department of the MBP as late as in February 1952. Sentenced to death on 23 June 1952 by the Warsaw Regional Court Martial. The Council of State did not use its power of pardon. Executed on 19 December 1952. Decorated with the Cross of Valour and the Gold Cross of Merit.

Source: [www.pozukiwania.ipn.gov.pl](http://www.pozukiwania.ipn.gov.pl)

Grażyna Kontrym-Sznajd, legendary ‘Żmudzin’s granddaughter, gives thanks on behalf of the identified victims’ families to all those engaged in the excavations led by Professor Szwagrzyk:

“In consequence, the Polish patriots murdered by the communist regime can finally be given a decent burial. In the case of my grandfather it was not only the matter of burial, but also of dispelling certain doubts. We sighed with relief when we learned that grandfather’s remains had been discovered because – and I suppose that other families were in a similar situation – it had remained uncertain whether he had indeed been executed



Grażyna Kontrym-Sznajd, Bolesław Kontrym’s granddaughter, during the ceremony of the handing out of the identification certificates (photo by Piotr Życieński).

or perhaps had been taken by the Russians and subjected to further torture. Such doubts might have arisen.”

Surprisingly for a representative of natural sciences, PUM Vice-Chancellor Professor Andrzej Ciechanowicz quotes a fragment of a poem that Zbigniew Herbert wrote for his relative killed at Katyn, Captain Edward Herbert:

*Only the buttons did not yield  
Witnesses of crime that survived*

“Today, two years after the establishment of the PBGOT, we know that in addition to the buttons, the deoxyribonucleic acid – the DNA, which is the carrier of the victims’ identity – has survived too,” says Professor Ciechanowicz. “A man cannot be erased. For a trace remains. Owing to those traces we have been able to identify the victims and restore the humanity and full names of 36 Polish soldiers. Sentenced to oblivion, to being erased from history, they have returned to their families, to our collective memory and awareness, which was mostly due to their relatives. I wish to give warm thanks to you, ladies and gentlemen, for believing us and entrusting us with your genetic material. Without it, it would be impossible to identify even one soldier. A simple buccal swab, which takes just a couple of seconds, is the small yet necessary step that facilitated our meeting today,” stresses the Vice-Chancellor.

At the same time he also urges the families to convince the relatives of the remaining victims to put similar trust in the genetic database.

“You are credible to them,” stresses Ciechanowicz.

Why that appeal? At that moment the families of only half of the victims discovered in the ‘soldiers’ field’ have submitted their DNA samples for comparative genetic tests, and without comparative material identification is impossible.

Six months later, on the eve of the next announcement of the identification results, IPN Chairman Łukasz Kamiński makes a similar appeal.

On 1 March, the National Day of Remembrance for the Accused Soldiers, in the Column Hall of the Presidential Palace stand five easels with blackened portraits. President Bronisław Komorowski opens the ceremony by stressing the need to complete the excavations and to commemorate the victims of communism.



PUM Vice-Chancellor Professor Andrzej Ciechanowicz thanks the identified victims' relatives for submitting their DNA samples for comparative genetic tests and encourages the families of the victims whose remains have not yet been found to do the same (photo by Piotr Życieński).

“I would like to express my profound hope that with our joint effort and without any unnecessary delay we shall succeed in finally bringing to a close the matters, which should be concluded as soon as possible because they have been awaiting conclusion for several decades. I wish to remind you that a bill, which I brought before Parliament in order to facilitate this process of permanent commemoration of the ‘soldiers’ field’ and other such places in entire Poland is waiting to go through the whole legislative process. The matter is difficult for it concerns other memories and families, for after all it is about exhumations. These are delicate matters, which need appropriate action. But this action must be taken.”

IPN Chairman Łukasz Kamiński reminds everyone that to establish the National Remembrance Day for the Accursed Soldiers, on which the ceremony is held, it was necessary to reverse the lies constructed for decades in communist Poland. After his speech, quoted in full at the beginning of this book, the faces of the four victims found in the ‘soldiers’ field’ in Powązki appear one by one on the easels. These are: **Marian Kaczmarek**,

**Józef Kozłowski, Stanisław Kutryb, and Edward Pytko.** The fifth person, found in the garrison cemetery in Gdańsk, is **Danuta Siedzik** ‘Inka’ – a paramedic from Szendzielarz’s detachment, who was somewhat less than 18 years old at the moment of the execution.



**Danuta Siedzik** (1928–1946), ‘Inka’, Fifth Vilna AK Brigade paramedic. Joined the AK with her sister Więstawa in December 1943. Several months later completed a course for paramedics. Active in the AK underground network directed by forester Stanisław Wołoncziej ‘Konus’ from Narewka. In October 1944 became a clerk in the forest inspectorate in Narewka. Arrested by the NKVD and the state security in June 1945 with the forest inspectorate employees under charges of cooperation with the pro-independence underground. Freed from the prisoners’ convoy by a detachment of the Fifth Vilna AK Brigade, which she then joined. Became a paramedic in ‘Konus’s detachment, then in the squadrons commanded by Lieutenant Jan Mazur ‘Piasť and Lieutenant Marcin Pluciński ‘Mściszaw’ in the platoon under the command of Zdzisław Badocha ‘Żelazny’. After the dissolution of the detachment in September 1945 began to attend a secondary school in Nierośno (Dąbrowa Białostocka municipality). In March 1946 resumed her underground activity by joining a detachment operating in Gdańsk Pomerania. Assigned as a paramedic to the squadron commanded by Zdzisław Badocha. Also performed duties of a messenger and occasionally of a reconnoiterer. Provided her fellow soldiers and one wounded MO functionary with medical assistance during the many operations conducted by the squadron. Her last mission was a journey for medical supplies to Malbork, Gdańsk, and Olsztyn, ordered by Olgierd Christa ‘Leszek’.

Arrested in a conspiratorial flat on the night of 19–20 July 1946 in Gdańsk-Wrzeszcz. The purpose of the brutal investigation, during which she was humiliated and tortured, was to obtain information about the activity of the detachment commanded by Major Zygmunt Szendzielarz ‘Łupaszka’. Siedzik did not denounce anybody. Received two death sentences on 3 August 1946 from the Gdańsk Regional Court Martial. President Bolesław Bierut did not use his power of pardon. Awaiting the execution, she managed to pass on to her relatives the following secret message from the gaol on Kurkowa Street in Gdańsk: “I am sad to have to die. Tell my grandma that I behaved appropriately.” Executed on 28 August 1946 just before her 18th birthday. According to an account

of Father Marian Prusak, who was forced to witness the execution, her last words were: "Long live Poland! Long live 'Łupaszko'!"

Source: [www.pozukiwania.ipn.gov.pl](http://www.pozukiwania.ipn.gov.pl)

As always, Krzysztof Szwaagrzyk discusses the path to finding the heroes who were given back their identity. The remains of Stanisław Kutryb were excavated in section Ł-I, where the works commenced. Kutryb was buried in a one-person hole, which is an exception, for as we know most of the victims were buried in mass graves. Another exception is that a personal item was found by his remains: a holy medal with Our Lady of Kodeń.

The identification certificate was received by Krystyna Majk, Stanisław Kutryb's niece. This is how she summed up her feelings at the moment when she learned about the discovery:

"It was like a miracle."

She had looked for her uncle all her life, although she never met him and knows him exclusively from oral accounts and one surviving picture owned by his fiancée. Ms. Krystyna's father, Bolesław, three years younger than Stanisław, did not live until the identification.

Bolesław Kutryb also fell victim to repressions. In 1946 he was arrested and detained in the prison in Działdowo. Transferred to Przasnysz, he was locked in a solitary confinement cell – he could either stand or crouch and he left the cell only for a 30-minute walk. The daily interrogations went on from eight o'clock in the morning to three in the afternoon.

Krystyna Majk:

"It was like that: questions – blows, questions – blows. I do not know exactly how long that lasted, but it must have been several weeks. And my father had no idea where his brother was."

Stanisław and Bolesław's mother died in February 1947.

"She was devastated that even though she had brought up two sons, neither of them was at her deathbed or would attend her funeral," adds Krystyna Majk.

Bolesław Kutryb was released in the spring of 1947.

"They realised that they would not force him to say anything. The military prosecutor told him, 'Away, you bastard, I don't want to see you here anymore'", says his daughter.



“The news of the identification was like a miracle to me,” says Krystyna Majk, Stanisław Kutryb’s niece. From left to right: Teresa Kondrat (Krystyna Majk’s sister), Elżbieta Majk (Krystyna’s daughter), Lidia Krasuska (Teresa Kondrat’s daughter), Józef Majk (Krystyna’s husband), Krystyna Majk (photo by Piotr Życieński).

Back during communism Bolesław Kutryb heard rumours that Stanisław had been seen somewhere in Masuria, but he did not believe them, convinced that if his brother were alive, he would find his family.

In the early 1990s somebody suggested describing the whole situation in a letter to the Polish Radio. The daughter wrote the letter and in reply was advised to inquire with the Supreme Court whether the sentence on Stanisław Kutryb had been carried out. The family received a copy of the execution report, from which they learned about Stanisław’s date of death and that Bolesław Bierut did not use his power of pardon, but they still had no idea where Stanisław had been buried. Today Ms. Krystyna says:

“Whenever I passed Powązki I intuitively looked at that cemetery.”

Then a friend of hers suggested that her uncle might have been buried in the ‘soldiers’ field’. But Ms. Krystyna, who does not live in Warsaw, did not know where that was. She even asked her daughter, who does live in the



capital, to try to find some commemoration on All Saints' Day. She did not find any, but soon her elder sister heard Doctor Andrzej Ossowski's appeal on the radio to submit DNA samples and she notified her mother about that. Krystyna did not hesitate even for a moment.



**Stanisław Kutryb** (1925–1949), 'Ryś', 'Rekin', NZW soldier. Born in Oborczyńska (Przasnysz district). Having received a draft card of the People's Polish Army, he went into hiding in September 1946. Two months later he joined the partisan detachment of the Eleventh NZW District commanded by Józef Kozłowski 'Las'. In January 1947 assigned to Bolesław Szyszko 'Klon's patrol operating in the Ostrołęka and Przasnysz districts. Intermittently served as a guard to the Sixteenth NZW District staff. After the reorganisation of the district in the spring and summer of 1947 assigned to a patrol of the NZW 'Orłowo' District Command commanded by Wacław Mówiński 'Szczygieł'. In July 1948 transferred to the 'Płomień' District Command patrol. In hiding with Stanisław Bączek 'Wiewiórka' in a forest bunker in the Baranowo county. Denounced by Secret Collaborator 'Błyskawica', the two partisans were apprehended on 3 October 1948 by a state security operational group. Detained in the local state security jail in Przasnysz, from where he was transferred to the prison in Mokotów on 14 December 1948. After a show hearing sentenced to death on 15 January 1949 by the Regional Court Martial during its *ex situ* session in Przasnysz. The Supreme Court Martial upheld the sentence. President Bolesław Bierut did not use his power of pardon. Executed in the prison on Rakowiecka Street in Warsaw on 19 May 1949. Apprehended with him, Stanisław Bączek 'Wiewiórka' was also sentenced to death and executed in that prison in May 1949.

Source: [www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl](http://www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl)

Two other soldiers – Józef Kozłowski and Marian Kaczmarek – were found under the asphalt lane. The latter was buried by the border of section Ł-II with the 1980s tombstones. Visible in the slides, the small bench, which belonged to that section had to be dismantled for the duration of the exhumations.

“This shows how many difficulties we have to overcome to reach the individual remains,” says Krzysztof Szwagrzyk.



**Marian Kaczmarek** (1904–1953), 'Paweł', engine driver, messenger of the Polish Government in Exile's intelligence centre in Barkhausen. Born in Kornowo (Leszno district). Locksmith by education. Until 1939 worked as a fitter for the Polish State Railways (PKP) in Poznań. PKP employee during the occupation. At that time helped two Soviet POWs assigned to work on the steam engines escape. After the end of the war involved in the

rebuilding of the Polish railways in Poznań. Pilot and engine driver of Poznań–Frankfurt (Oder) passenger trains. Between the spring of 1949 and April 1952 associated with the intelligence centre in Barkhausen subordinated to the Polish Government in Exile in London. As a messenger he transported the individuals sent to him by a branch of the centre in Berlin across the Polish-GDR border. Transported and delivered intelligence mail to the addresses he received. His contact was Maria Ginter – another communication link between the headquarters of the intelligence centre in Barkhausen and Marian Kaczmarek. Kaczmarek was arrested by the state security on 6 April 1952 in his Poznań flat. The trial was classified and proceeded without a defence counsel. Sentenced to death on 7 November 1952 by the Warsaw Regional Court Martial. The Council of State did not use its power of pardon. Executed in the prison on Rakowiecka Street in Warsaw on 7 April 1953.

Source: [www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl](http://www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl)



**Józef Kozłowski** (1910–1949), 'Las', 'Vis', 'J. Kawecki', Sixteenth NZW District commander. Born in Demene in Latvia. During 1931–1932 served in the Fifth Infantry Regiment of the Legions in Vilna and was made a non-commissioned officer. A forester in the Stara Wilejka county. In 1940 joined an underground organisation in the occupied Vilna region, then in the ZWZ/AK. In late 1943 mobilised by the occupation authorities

to a Belarussian police formation, which was to protect the local population from the Soviet partisan units (probably sent there by the AK). A sub-detachment of that group quartered in Stara Wilejka, many of whose members were Polish, was commonly referred to as the Polish Legion. Quickly evacuated west by the Germans, the unit did not manage to join the partisan AK brigades during Operation Tempest in the Vilna

region. The unification took place in the Ostrołęka county, where the unit liquidated its German commander and joined the partisan detachment of the Fifth Cavalry Regiment of the AK commanded by Second Lieutenant Kazimierz Stefanowicz 'As'. Leading his subordinates from the Polish eastern borderland, Kozłowski fought against the Germans within the framework of Operation Tempest in the vicinity of Jazgarka, Karaska, and Charciabłda. Continued his pro-independence activity in the Ostrołęka AK/AKO District, participating in many self-defence operations against the communist repression apparatus.

In the autumn of 1945 transferred with his subordinates to the Sixteenth NZW District commanded by Captain Zbigniew Kulesza 'Młot'. Special Shock Unit chief in the Ostrołęka county and then in the whole Sixteenth NZW Masovia District. Commanded many combat operations against the state security, KBW, and MO. After Captain 'Młot' had come out, on 20 May 1946 the middle-level leadership elected Kozłowski as the commander of the Sixteenth NZW District (he changed the District's codename to 'Orzeł'). Changed his codename to 'Vis'. Reorganised the Sixteenth NZW District by establishing seven district commands, whose staffs operated as mobile partisan groups. Launched an informational-propaganda campaign. Counteracted ordinary crime. Surrounded on 25 June 1948 with his staff in the bunkers near the village of Gleba (Kadzidło municipality) as a result of a denunciation made by state security agent 'Zadrozny'. More than 50 platoons of the First and Second KBW Brigades, that is more than 1,500 soldiers, 4 aircraft, and artillery, took part in the operation against the dozen or so partisans. After a whole day's combat and an unsuccessful attempt to fight its way through the communist troops, the partisan defence was overcome (four partisans perished, nine others – including two wounded – and two women and a baby fell into the communists' hands). Wounded, Józef Kozłowski was transferred to Warsaw, where he was subjected to a brutal investigation. Sentenced to death on 29 April 1949 by the Warsaw Regional Court Martial during its ex situ session in Ostrołęka. President Bolesław Bierut did not use his power of pardon. Executed on 12 August 1949 in the prison on Rakowiecka Street in Warsaw with three of his closest co-workers: Czesław Kania 'Natęcz', Bolesław Szyszko 'Klon', and Piotr Macuk 'Sęp'.

Source: [www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl](http://www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl)

The remains of Edward Pytko were found right by the cemetery's outer wall. The first time that the specialists worked at his burial pit was in May

2013, but the excavation had to be discontinued because it had been raining for a week. The works resumed in September 2014.

Krzysztof Szwagrzyk recalls:

“When we dug up the burial pit we learned with all certainty that it was the last prison burial in that row of prison burials. Right next to it, right by the wall begin the ‘sanitary burials’. So this is the last Unwavering Soldier buried in that row right by the cemetery’s wall. When we excavated the whole burial pit we concluded that Pytko had his hands tied before his death, which we could tell by the characteristic positioning of his arms,” explains the professor.



**Edward Pytko** (1929–1952), pilot officer, instructor at the Fifth Air Force Officer School in Radom. Born in Wiewiórka (Dębica district), where he completed his primary education. Continued his education in the Industrial-Radiotechnical Secondary School in Dzierżoniów. In 1949 volunteered to the army. Assigned to the Air Force Officer School, where he completed a pilot’s course and then in 1951 a fighter plane pilot’s course.

Since 26 August 1951 served as pilot instructor at the Fifth Air Force Officer School in the rank of a Chief Warrant Officer. On 30 April 1952 promoted to Second Lieutenant. On 7 August 1952 during a training flight aboard Yak-9 decided to flee to the West as he had been observed and persecuted for his refusal to cooperate with the communist state security. Intended to reach the American occupation zone in Austria through Czechoslovakia. Landed at the Wiener Neustadt airfield in the Soviet occupation zone as thick clouds had rendered proper navigation impossible. Apprehended by the Soviet troops and handed over to the Polish authorities. Sentenced to death on 18 August 1952 by the Air Force Court Martial. On 21 August 1952 the Supreme Court Martial rejected his appeal and upheld the sentence. President Bolesław Bierut did not use his power of pardon. Executed in the prison on Rakowiecka Street in Warsaw on 29 August 1952.

Source: [www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl](http://www.poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl)

Szwagrzyk stresses that each identification brings new information about the chronology of the burials, or actually its lack. That case was no exception. Executed in 1949, Stanisław Kutryb was buried in the row of

graves dug in 1948, while Marian Kaczmarek, who was murdered in 1953, was buried with those executed in 1951. Such situations should be expected until the end of the identifications.

In comparison to the excavations in the ‘soldiers’ field’ the search in the garrison cemetery in Gdańsk can be regarded as more than convenient.

Professor Szwagrzyk:

“We knew we had to go to the garrison cemetery in Gdańsk due to the document found two years ago by Waldemar Kowalski from Gdańsk, for which we are very grateful to him. We knew that Danuta Siedzik had probably been buried with Feliks Selmanowicz ‘Zagończyk’ somewhere in that section. After three days of work we found four burial pits in the spot we see here – under the pavement and next to it. The one most important to us was in the middle section. There were two chests without lids in one hole, next to each other. In the left one were the remains of Danuta Siedzik ‘Inka’. The hole’s depth was 49 centimetres. She had been buried in shoes and clothes as we found buttons on her.”

Moved, Maciej Pawełek, Danuta Siedzik’s relative, gives thanks to the search team on behalf of the identified victims’ families:

“We wish to ask for one last thing: a decent burial, so that historic justice would be done.”

During the same ceremony Andrzej Krzysztof Kunert, the ROPWiM Secretary, says:

“The following words were embroidered on the standard, consecrated by Bishop Józef Gawlina, which was presented to the Polish Air Forces at the Swinderby base on 16 July 1941: ‘Love requires sacrifice.’ General Ujejski, who received that standard from General Sikorski, promised that the airmen would fight until the end, ready to sacrifice their lives in line with that commandment. There is no doubt that when General Ujejski uttered those words and when the airmen received that standard – which they immediately called a relic, which it became when it brushed against the painting of Our Lady of the Gate of Dawn in occupied Vilna – they did not suspect that this motto, this commandment would become a motto to soldiers of the Underground Polish State, and also to the Accursed Soldiers. One of them and one of the first three executed in the communist prison at Lublin Castle wrote the following in his farewell letter to his wife before his execution, on 15 November 1944: ‘Love requires sacrifice. I shall die for what I have deemed the most beautiful in life.’ If that motto was the most

important thing to them, the following one should be equally important to us: 'If love requires sacrifice, then so does the victim.' It demands our grateful memory, the memory of the nation and of the state. It demands adequate commemoration, it demands a decent burial, it demands justice, and it demands, sometimes after decades, making sense of that death, which often seemed nonsensical at that time.

## THE PANTHEON OR A DECENT RESTING PLACE

At the beginning of the search project most of the families expected that their identified relatives would be buried in family graves. Soon, however, it was agreed that the heroes would be buried in the same place where their remains were found, which Professor Krzysztof Szwagrzyk keenly advocated.

In December 2014 the ROPWiM announces a competition for the architectural concept of a pantheon/mausoleum of the victims of the communist crimes. During the ceremony of the announcement of the identification results at the Presidential Palace ROPWiM Secretary Andrzej Krzysztof Kunert declares that the winners shall be announced in eight days, on 9 March 2015. Due to this, as he assures, the pantheon can be erected by 27 September 2015, that is, by the Polish Underground State Day, for which the burial of those identified so far is scheduled. One of the requirements given to the designers was to allow for the fact that the search in section Ł-II, that is, the one still covered with later tombstones, is still in the future. Consequently, the project had to be one that could be carried out in two stages.

The results of the competition are indeed announced on the said date. Unfortunately, two days later serious doubts arise as to the originality of the winning project. In the end the jury chooses a project by Jan Kuka from Katowice and Michał Dąbek from Cracow, originally awarded with a distinction.

“The project defines the pantheon/mausoleum as a composition of monumental, spread out concrete pillars. The structure of the rectangular modules of the mausoleum is projected onto the level of the roof, thus defining an interior with a pronounced play of light and creating a confined interior conducive to contemplation. The restrictive geometry of the design, the openwork structure, and the distinct lattice construction suspended at





Funeral mass celebrated by Polish Army Bishop General Józef Guzdek, Warsaw, Józefa Piłsudskiego Square, 27 September 2015 (photo by Piotr Molecki/Chancellery of the President of the Republic of Poland)

3.4 metres create an atmosphere conducive to prayer and contemplation. The lattice construction of the roof reflects the interrupted course of history and its dramatic character. The powerful design is based on a small number of monochrome materials. The burial cells are situated in the concrete pillars, with the information about the heroes pressed onto plaques, also made of concrete. The future square in ‘soldiers’ field’ B shall reflect the modular theme of the main composition,” reads the description of the project.

According to the jury, the distinction was awarded “for the powerful spatial expression of the project, the consequence in the development of the concept, and the atmosphere in the pantheon/mausoleum created by the austerity of the material and light.”

On the sunny Sunday morning of 27 September 2015, the 76<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the PPP, on Józef Piłsudski Square in Warsaw stand 35 coffins covered with white and red flags. Five of them are also decorated with Virtuti Militari ribbons. They have all been placed before



Coffins with identified remains of victims of communism by the pantheon on the Military Powązki cemetery in Warsaw, 27 September 2015 (photo by Jacek Domański)

the field altar situated between the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and the cross commemorating the mass John Paul II celebrated here in 1979. This is the place from where those identified in the ‘soldiers’ field’ embark on their final journey. We may say: on their return journey to Powązki for their burial, though this time not in anonymous death pits but in a specially erected pantheon. The families of the remaining 5 of the 40 identified soldiers have decided to bury their relatives elsewhere or they have not reached a decision yet.

Before the altar gather the families of the identified, the officials, and the scientists engaged in the search process, as well as dozens of Varsovians and people from other localities. The requiem mass is celebrated by Father General Józef Guzdek, the Polish Army Bishop.

“The Accursed Soldiers – who are they? What background do they have?” asks the Bishop during the sermon. “They grew up in the spirit of Evangelical radicalism. ‘Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends,’ said Jesus. It was obvious to them that



Families of the identified victims inside the pantheon on the Military Powązki cemetery in Warsaw, 27 September 2015 (photo by Piotr Molecki/Chancellery of the President of the Republic of Poland)

love required sacrifice. They proved their adherence to the Evangelical principle that the blood shed and sacrifice of one's life are a measure of one's heroic love of God and homeland. They were as sensitive as doves and as cunning as snakes – just as the Gospel commands. A number of them were not deceived by the insidious plans of the communist authorities, which announced an amnesty. Major Hieronim Dekutowski 'Zapora' warned against that. That special force paratrooper and legendary Lublin region commander, whose earthly remains we surround today with love and prayer, wrote, 'Amnesty is for thieves, while we are the Polish Army.' They remained faithful to the ideal of the Polish Underground State and the ethos of the Home Army until the end, continuing their struggle for our homeland's independence after 1944.'

The Bishop also addresses the families of the victims of communism, "Today we also need to acknowledge the deep and justified sorrow you have in your hearts. During the meeting organised last week for you by the Council for Protection of Memory of Combat and Martyrdom I was often asked why the honours and privileges acquired by the perpetrators

have not yet been challenged, why the executioners are buried with military honours. ‘This pains us,’ somebody added. ‘It pains us even more when we hear that we should forget about everything.’ I shall never forget that meeting, those questions, and those conversations. The postulates of the families are not at odds with the spirit of Gospel. When Jesus called on people to love one another he did not negate the call for justice. During [today’s] second reading Saint Jacob the Apostle reminded us about the accountability for the evil we do to our neighbours: ‘You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered the innocent one, who was not opposing you. Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming on you.’ No, this is not about revenge. It is about justice. Only the truth and the justice that results from it open our hearts to forgiveness,” stressed the Polish Army ordinary.

After the end of the mass the coffins are transported to Military Powązki. Representatives of the highest state authorities give speeches at the recently completed pantheon. Polish President Andrzej Duda could not come due to the 70<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly, which coincides with the funeral. He notified the families of the identified about his absence during a meeting at the Presidential Palace held a week and a half ago. On that occasion he stressed that the funeral should take place on the previously set date despite his absence.

The letter from the head of state is read out by his representative Wojciech Kolarski, the Undersecretary of State in the Chancellery of the Polish President. Andrzej Duda’s letter reads:

“Despite the repressions, persecutions, and intimidation the ‘soldiers’ field’ has remained a place of national remembrance. The relatives have preserved the knowledge of the fate of their brothers, husbands, fathers, friends, and brothers-in-arms, who were tortured to death. They secretly put up pieces of paper with their surnames even though nobody was certain if this was their burial place. The rumours about the Ł section went from mouth to mouth, said in whispers, which became louder and louder. When the totalitarian empire of evil finally fell, the truth about soldiers of the post-war underground sounded at full volume. And today it constitutes our shared heritage and an indicator of Polish identity.

But unfortunately the ‘soldiers’ field’ also symbolises the negligence of the last two decades. The relatives of the victims and all of us, Poles, had to

wait too long for a proper commemoration of our heroes. Free Poland took too long a time to do them historic and human justice. [...]

As the President of the Republic of Poland on behalf of the entire Polish nation I hereby honour the members of the second underground who perished or were killed. By laying their earthly remains in the pantheon/mausoleum independent Poland is doing its Christian duty and – at least partially – paying its debt of gratitude to its most faithful sons. At the same time I wish to stress that this ceremony crowns the first stage of the excavations in the ‘soldiers’ field’ but it does not conclude them. I think it tremendously important to bring the exhumations to an end and to identify all those found and give them a decent burial.

The Polish state must honour its true heroes: those who stood the most difficult of tests and did not lay down their arms and fought courageously against the enemies of their homeland until the end and did not hesitate to sacrifice their lives.”

Prime Minister Ewa Kopacz also gave a speech:

“The Accursed, Unwavering Soldiers’ homeland was the Second Republic of Poland and then the Polish Underground State. So they belonged to the generation to which Polish independence regained in 1918 constituted an almost mystic value. It was considered a treasure to be protected at all cost, even if it meant sacrificing one’s life. They did not care about any geopolitical considerations or the superpowers’ agreement reached at Yalta. They fought alone to give testimony to Poles’ inalienable right to self-determination. It was a heroism of the highest order. The Unwavering, Accursed Soldiers paid with their lives for their service to the Republic of Poland. We are aware that we still owe them a debt.”

Andrzej Kunert, the ROPWiM Secretary, recalls the individuals and the milieus engaged in the reinstatement of the memory of the Accursed Soldiers and in the process of searching for unknown burial places of victims of communist terror. He also addresses the identified soldiers’ families:

“It was you who remembered, longed, and waited for almost seventy years. At first you waited for the discovery of the burial place, then for the exhumation, and finally for the identification. You waited for any news. You waited assiduously and patiently, with assiduousness and patience worthy of the utmost admiration.”

At the end Kunert addresses the most important personages on that day – those who are to be buried:

“As of today you are no longer anonymous victims buried in death pits and sentenced to oblivion. You have your own place in the pantheon/mausoleum built of light stone similar to that used in the fourth Katyn Cemetery in Kiev-Bikivnia. We used light stone because we have been extracting you from darkness and oblivion. And this lightness means that we retract all that evil. This lightness symbolically shows that your sacrifice, which for dozens of years remained hidden also from your loved ones, was not in vain.”

After the ecumenical prayer the soldiers lay the caskets in the niches inside the mausoleum. Each plaque bears the victim’s name, surname, codename, rank, and the date of birth and death. The relatives of those to whom we say our last farewell gather inside the columbarium. There finally is a place where they can pray for their murdered fathers, grandfathers, brothers, uncles, or people important to them for various reasons.

Hopefully, the remains of the next identified victims from among those already exhumed shall be laid here along with those which are still under the 1980s tombstones next to the pantheon. That became more probable when the amended Act on cemeteries and burials, on war graves and cemeteries, and on the Institute of National Remembrance – the Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation came into effect on 2 August 2015. On the same day the IPN Chairman applied to the Mazowieckie Province Governor to move the tombstones blocking access to the remains of the heroes at the same time requesting that the decision be put into effect immediately. These are all highly complex processes but the will to overcome the obstacles is so great that one cannot help but be optimistic.

Warsaw, February 2016





(photo by Jacek Domański)



# APPENDIX

## Heroes found in the 'soldiers' field' and those responsible for their death

The executed	Prosecutors	Judges
Stanisław Abramowski	Jan Trynkosz, Roman Strugalski	Stanisław Wetecek
Władysław Borowiec	no data	Jan Hryckowian, the second instance: Kazimierz Drohomirecki, Henryk Zapolski, Zdzisław Gołębiowski
Henryk Borowy-Borowski Antoni Olechnowicz Zygmunt Szendzielarz	Zenon Rychlik	Mieczysław Widaj, the second instance: Wilhelm Świątkowski, Leo Hochberg, Alfred Janowski
Bolesław Budelewski	Józef Rzczycki	Józef Badecki, the second instance: Kazimierz Drohomirecki, Zdzisław Gołębiowski, Benjamin Karpiński
Edmund Bukowski	Stanisław Krawczyk	Władysław Litmanowicz, the second instance: Józef Dziwogo, Roman Bojko, Marian Krupski
Jan Czeredys	Hygin Jerzy Radwan Rymdejko, Feliks Aspis	Franciszek Szeliński, Juliusz Krupski
Julian Czerwiakowski	Adam Adamuszek, Benjamin Wajsblech	Marian Stępczyński, the second instance: Marian Mazur
Bolesław Częścik	Kazimierz Adamczyk, Kazimierz Paskudzki	Edward Holler, the second instance: Wilhelm Świątkowski, Leo Hochberg, Roman Kryże
Hieronim Dekutowski Roman Groński Stanisław Łukasik Jerzy Miatkowski Tadeusz Pelak Edmund Tudruj Arkadiusz Wasilewski	Tadeusz Malik	Józef Badecki, the second instance: Józef Dziwogo, Alfred Janowski, Józef Warecki
Adam Gajdek	Władysław Góra	Zbigniew Furtak, the second instance: Józef Dziwogo, Józef Warecki, Alfred Janowski

<b>The executed</b>	<b>Prosecutors</b>	<b>Judges</b>
Stefan Głowacki	Leon Wilczyński	Zbigniew Furtak, the second instance: Józef Dziwogo, Henryk Zapolski, Alfred Janowski
Marian Kaczmarek	Eugeniusz Witczak, Mieczysław Bogucki	Jerzy Godlewski, Jerzy Drohomirecki, Bogdan Lisowski, the second instance: Aleksander Tomaszewski, Roman Kryże, Marian Krupski
Stanisław Kasznica	Czesław Szpądrowski, Mieczysław Dyttry	Alfred Janowski, Henryk Szczepański, the second instance: Kazimierz Drohomirecki, Józef Dziwogo, Józef Warecki
Aleksander Kita Marian Orlik	Mieczysław Lis	Juliusz Krupski, Zygmunt Krasuski, Bolesław Wnorowski
Bolesław Kontrym	Adam Adamuszek, Beniamin Wajsblech	Czesław Kosim, the second instance: Gustaw Auscaler, Mieczysław Dobromeski, Aleksander Bachrach
Józef Kozłowski	Ireneusz Boliński	Mieczysław Widaj, the second instance: Kazimierz Drohomirecki, Zdzisław Gołębiowski, Józef Badecki
Zygryd Kuliński Karol Rakoczy	Stanisław Misiak	Piotr Adamowski, the second instance: Kazimierz Drohomirecki, Zdzisław Gołębiowski, Witold Smoczyk
Stanisław Kutryb	Franciszek Łaszczewski, Wojciech Zakrzewski	Stanisław Wotoczek, the second instance: Kazimierz Drohomirecki, Henryk Zapolski, Leo Hochberg
Józef Łukaszewicz	Franciszek Rafałowski	Józef Badecki, the second instance: Józef Dziwogo, Alfred Janowski, Zdzisław Gołębiowski
Stanisław Mieszkowski Zbigniew Przybyszewski	Władysław Kochan, Leonard Azarkiewicz	Piotr Parzeniecki, Juliusz Krupski, Teofil Karczmarz

<b>The executed</b>	<b>Prosecutors</b>	<b>Judges</b>
Henryk Pawłowski	Adam Adamuszek	Zbigniew Furtak, the second instance: Józef Dziwogo, Alfred Janowski, Józef Warecki
Edward Pytko	Juliusz Mazurkiewicz	Ludwik Fels, Władysław Marszałek
Eugeniusz Smoliński	Arnold Załęski	Edward Jęczmyk, Włodzimirz Łabaziewicz, the second instance: Józef Dziwogo, Józef Warecki, Alfred Janowski
Dionizy Sosnowski	Tadeusz Piaskowski, Henryk Ligęza	Mieczysław Widaj, the second instance: Aleksander Tomaszewski, Edward Milewski, Zdzisław Gołębiowski
Zygmunt Szymanowski	Kazimierz Górski	Mieczysław Widaj, the second instance: Kazimierz Drohomirecki, Roman Kryże, Leo Hochberg
Ludwik Świder	Jan Pugacewicz	Mieczysław Widaj, the second instance: Aleksander Tomaszewski, Zdzisław Gołębiowski, Roman Kryże
Aleksander Tomaszewski	Leon Wilczyński	Józef Badecki, the second instance: Józef Dziwogo, Henryk Zapolski, Alfred Janowski
Wacław Walicki	Jan Dyduch	Mieczysław Widaj, the second instance: Kazimierz Drohomirecki, Leo Hochberg, Benjamin Karpiński
Ryszard Widelski	Wiesław Trutkowski	Józef Badecki, the second instance: Józef Dziwogo, Alfred Janowski, Józef Warecki

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**In** this story the dark history of the Stalinist period intertwines with the knowledge of the state-of-the-art technology of genetic identification. The scientists' professionalism contrasts with the emotions of the victims' families – hope, tension, and painful memories. We go from the excavated section of the Powązki cemetery to the high-tech genetic laboratories in Szczecin and Cracow. We access the memory of the communist prisons, brutal investigations, and fatherless childhood only to look into the future where the research methods developed by the Polish scientists shall become an internationally followed model. All this has one objective: to repay the debt to those who fought for a free and sovereign Poland.

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