



ARTYKUŁ

The cursed nurse

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Twice the death penalty, 15 years of imprisonment, loss of public rights and honorary citizen rights forever and the forfeiture of wealth by the State Treasury – that was the sentence given by the Communist Regional Military Court in Gdańsk for not even 18 years old Danuta Siedzikówna codename “Inka”, a nurse of the Polish Home Army.

Justices serving under Maj. Adam Gajewski needed only thirty minutes of recess on August 3rd 1946, to decide to sentence the minor nurse to be shot, in accordance to the motion of the prosecutor of the Regional Military Prosecution, Waław Krzyżanowski. She was accused of being a member of the organisation, which “set out to violently remove the state authorities and forcefully change the current democratic system in Poland, while

she partook as a nurse in gang raids” and that as a member of a military unit “she took part in several assassinations of officers of the Security Office, Citizens’ Militia, Railroad Guard, soldiers of the Red Army and representatives of the political class.” The public defender Jan Chmielowski asked the president of the State National Council Bolesław Bierut for a pardon...

Under a changed name

“Inka” was a nurse in the 5th Vilnius Home Army Brigade, led by Zygmunt Szendzielarz codename “Łupaszka”. Although, she had sworn an oath already in 1944 and had helped the Home Army structures in her hometown region, she didn’t end up in “Łupaszka’s” brigade until 1945. In fact, it happened mainly by accident. At the time, Siedzikówna was working at the Narewka forestry. In June 1945, officers of the NKVD and the Communist District Public Security Office arrested all of the forestry workers, accusing them of cooperation with the Polish underground state. Near the village of Hajnówka, Szendzielarz’s partisans, led by Stanisław Wołoncej, rescued the prisoners from the convoy. Siedzikówna, taking on the codename “Inka”, decided to stay in the woods with them.

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On July 13th 1946, on the orders of the deputy commander of her squadron Olgierd Christa “Leszek”, “Inka” went to Malbork, Olsztyn and Gdańsk, where she was to get bandages and medicine, but first and foremost to find out what had happened to their commander Zdzisław Badocha “Żelazny”, who hadn’t returned to the unit after his convalescence in a farmhouse near Malbork. Before leaving for her task, she changed from her nurse outfit to civilian clothes: “In a dress borrowed from a landlady she looked more girly than usual. On a daily basis, she dressed up like all the other <<sisters>>, in pants and long boots, never in a skirt” - recalled Christa.

In her travels, she was accompanied by Henryk Kazimierczak codename “Czajka”. In Malbork, at the Rodziewiczówny 9 Street, was one of “Łupaszka’s” conspiracy hideouts, ran by Helena Tarasiewicz. It was there, where Danka found out what had happened to the wounded “Żelazny”, who was getting back to full

health in an estate ran by Ottomar Zielke, in a nearby Czernin. However, before she got to the pointed address, she met the son of the owner of the apartment, Zbigniew Tarasiewicz, who told her that Badocha was shot by the Communists. To confirm that information, Inka travelled to Olsztyn, to the next contact point, and on July 19th to Gdańsk, where "Czajka" pointed her to sisters Jadwiga and Halina Mikołajewskie. Their house, at Wróblewska 7 Street in the Wrzeszcz district of Gdańsk, was also an underground outpost. Danuta Siedzikówna got there in the evening and planned to start her journey back to her unit in the morning.



Danuta Siedzikówna with her friend from school, Podlasie district of Poland, 1930s



**Danuta Siedzikówna "Inka",
Narewka village, April 1945**



**Danuta Siedzikówna in front of
the school in the Narewka village,
1944**



**Danuta Siedzikówna "Inka" with
a friend, Podlasie district of
Poland, winter of 1945**

Unfortunately, Mikołajewscy's house was under constant observation of the officers of the District Public

Security Office, who got the list of contact points from the liaison officer of the 5th Vilnius Home Army Brigade, persuaded to cooperate, named Regina Mordas. In the morning of July 20th, the Communist officers entered the house. Siedzikówna had false documents on the name of Ina Zalewska, yet the Communists were still certain she was a member of “Łupaszka’s” unit, so hated by them. What’s interesting, the Security Office hadn’t arrested the Mikołajewskie sisters until some time later, which gave them the time to destroy some of the conspiracy documents. Soon after, they were released from detention. The prosecutor of the Regional Military Prosecution in Gdańsk, Capt. Adolf Brunicki, while making the decision to arrest “Inka” called for the temporary detention until August 31st 1946. It’s worth adding, that due to the information received from Regina Mordas, less than 2 weeks prior, on July 8th 1946, Feliks Selmanowicz codename “Zagończyk” had been arrested as well. It was actually to protect “Regina” (that was the codename taken by Mordas) as an important source of information, that the Communists decided to push forward the dates of “Inka’s” and “Zagończyk’s” executions.

Trial under Security Office’s eye

It’s unclear, how did the Communists learn the true name of “Inka”. From the Security Office’s documents it can be gathered, that the Communists knew what it was already on July 31st. The whole prosecuting process of “Inka” was supervised both in the prosecution and in court by the officers of the Investigative Division of the District Public Security Office in Gdańsk, particularly by chief Józef Bik and investigative officer Andrzej Stawicki. The latter, only eleven days after Danuta Siedzikówna’s arrest, prepared the indictment and demanded the highest price to be paid. Chief Józef Bik wrote this upon handing “Inka’s” case files to the military prosecution, on August 2nd:

“At the same time, I request the date of the trial to be set with the President of the Court for the day of 03.08.1946 due to the fact, that the witnesses were called for the aforementioned date via telephonograms.”

The telephonograms were also sent on August 2nd, even before the case files ended up in the prosecutor’s office and in the court.

The Communists hoped Siedzikówna would

reveal meeting places, hideouts or at least addresses of trusted contacts, which would allow them to not only break apart “the foresters”, but first and foremost to capture Zygmunt Szendzielarz himself. Despite the tortures, “Inka” didn’t rat on anyone.

Prior to the trial, Danka was brutally questioned. As described by the people who met “Inka” in detention, she was being bullied, humiliated and tortured. Officers of the Security Office wanted to know everything about the plans of all units under “Łupaszka’s” command. They demanded information about certain partisans and their associates. Perhaps, the Communists hoped Siedzikówna would reveal meeting places, hideouts or at least addresses of trusted contacts, which would allow them to not only break apart “the foresters”, but first and foremost to capture Zygmunt Szendzielarz himself. Despite the tortures, “Inka” didn’t rat on anyone.

In the indictment, prepared on July 31st 1946 by the investigative officer Andrzej Stawicki, Danuta Siedzikówna was accused of:

“active participation in Maj. <<Łupaszka’s>> forest unit, which set out to violently remove the elected Supreme Power Authorities of the Polish Nation”

and

“participation in attacks on officers of the Security Office and Citizens’ Militia, outposts of the Citizens’ Militia and the Railroad Guard, passenger trains and on May 24th 1946, in the Podjazy village in the Kartuzy district, she committed a violent act on an employee of the Citizens’ Militia, citizen Ratajczyk Longin, shooting him with a handgun, wounding him and later, threatening him with a gun, took the wounded’s belt and ammunition magazine. Then, on the day of June 10th 1946, in the Tulice village in the Sztum region, she gave the order for her fellow bandits to shoot two employees of the Sztum Security Office, citizens Kantorski Maksymilian and Baczyński Kazimierz, which was carried out.”

She was also accused of urging to commit a crime (the Tulice incident) and the illegal possession of weapons.

In violation of all legal standards, and even of the Communist law at the time, "Inka" hadn't heard her charges until the trial. She admitted to being part of an armed unit and to the possession of a weapon since May 1946: "I fired only a single shot from the handgun, in the woods to try it out". Janina Smoleńska "Jachna", also a nurse of the 5th Vilnius Home Army Brigade, recalled in her memoirs, that all the nurses had to be armed under the orders of Maj. "Łupaszka", to defend themselves. Danka denied the absurd accusations of shooting Longin Ratajczyk, an officer of the Citizens' Militia, in the Podjazy incident and ordering to shoot two officers of the Security Office in Tulice.

Ten officers of the Security Office and Citizens' Militia were the only ones called as witnesses of the deeds "Inka" was accused of. For the trial, which began at 4 pm., on August 3rd 1946, as requested by the Security Office, came: Longin Ratajczyk, Mieczysław Mazur, Edmund Borkowski, Franciszek Bablich and Eugeniusz Adamski, other witnesses' testimonies were read aloud. The most aggravating testimonies were given by Ratajczyk and Adamski.

Ratajczyk stated before the court:

"I recognise the defendant, as the person who took part in the clash [...]. The defendant took my belt and ammunition magazine . I also saw, when I was still sitting in the car, that the defendant was running towards us with a handgun. That's when a shot was fired and I was wounded in the back. After the bullet, which I now present to the court, was removed, it turned out it was a bullet from a handgun, which leads me to believe it was fired by the defendant."

Borkowski and Mazur confirmed, that "Inka" was in the unit, which they fought against near Sulęczyn; however, none of them saw her using a gun. Mazur even added, that on the order of her commander she threw bandages for the wounded Communist officers.



Soldiers of the 4th squadron of the 5th Vilnius Home Army Brigade, Białostoczczyzna district of Poland, summer of 1945



**Marek Odyn-Jankowski „Marek”,
Danuta Siedzikówna „Inka”,
Bogdan Obuchowski „Zbyszek”,
Pomorze district of Poland,
spring of 1946**

“...I did what was right...”

That’s how the officers of the Regional Station of the Citizens’ Militia in Kartuzy testified in July and August of 1946. When they were questioned on June 12th, none of them mentioned a women shooting at them. What was in Ratajczyk’s report, was the mention of receiving bandages from a nurse of the partisan unit. Another officer, Edwin Cieszyński filled in the description of this incident:

“I asked their commander if they could leave us some bandages, so I could help my wounded colleagues. They gave us two bandages, then one of the women in the car cut up some more bandages for us.”

The case of the accusation of the supposed ordering to shoot the two captured Security Office officers in Tulice was handled in a similar manner. The squadron led by Sec. Lieut. Badocha “Żelazny” was part of the 5th Vilnius Home Army Brigade of Maj. Zygmunt Szendzielarz “Łupaszka”, which was part of the Polish Armed

Forces in the country. This formation, since the beginning of its activity in the Vilnius district of the Home Army, had been known for its discipline and military conduct. It was an expertly trained military unit, where orders were given by its commander, not by a nurse! Olgierd Christa, who took command over the squadron during the Tulice operation, said after many years:

"<<Inka>> carried a small handgun, but she never used it. She didn't take active part in any of the operations. She was a nurse, and her job was to provide medical service for the squadron. [...] Our enemies surrendered after a short exchange of fire. I ordered to shoot two of them - they were officers of the Security Office. At the time, <<Inka>> was busy helping <<Żelazny>>, who was shot in the lungs. She didn't say she recognised anyone as the officers of the Security Office, nor did she say to shoot them."

To accuse a nurse of actions so opposite to her calling and function at the battlefield was exceptionally mean and was part of creating an infamous legend of "Łupaszka's" soldiers, painting them as ordinary criminals by the Communists. The fact, that such a version of what happened was told by the people whom "Inka" helped, serves as the best example of their twisted morality.

The prosecutor read aloud the grounds for the sentence and informed that there was no pardon. His last words were: <<To the traitors of the Polish nation, fire!>> At this moment the sentenced shouted, as if they agreed upon this earlier: <<Long live Poland!>>. Then shots were fired and they sank to the ground."

The public defender Jan Chmielowski sent a request for a pardon to the president of the State National Council, arguing it with, among other things, the fact, that the defendant was underage and an orphan. However, Danuta Siedzikówna's signature was missing; only her attorney signed it. On August 19th, Bolesław Bierut denied Siedzikówna her right to live. The sentence was to be carried out on August 28th 1946, three days before the "preventive measure" set for her on the day of her arrest.

Before the firing squad, stood together Danuta Siedzikówna "Inka" and Feliks Selmanowicz "Zagończyk". Priest Marian Prusak, who prior to the shooting gave the sentenced their last confessions, was present at the carrying out of the death penalty. He later reminisced:

"Finally, I was led down the stairs to a basement of sorts. They were there already. I believe they were handcuffed or had their hands tied. The hall was very small, like two rooms. I had a cross, I gave it to them so they could give it a kiss. They wanted to cover their eyes, but they didn't let them do that. A bunch of people were standing beside us, so it was quite cramped. There was a military prosecutor and lots of some young officers of the Security Office. The poor couple was made to stand by the poles. In the corner, there was a little table, from where the prosecutor read aloud the sentence and from where he ordered to perform the penalty. There was something like a niche, made of a red, non-plastered brick I think, the poles were half the height of a man. They were made to stand by them [...]. The prosecutor read aloud the grounds for the sentence and informed that there was no pardon. His last words were: <<To the traitors of the Polish nation, fire!>> At this moment the sentenced shouted, as if they agreed upon this earlier: <<Long live Poland!>>. Then shots were fired and they sank to the ground."

The commander of the firing squad finished them off with a handgun.

Only after the execution, "Inka's" family received a note she wrote in prison, saying: "I'm sad I have to die. Tell my grandma, that I did what was right...".

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