

Institute of National Remembrance

<https://ipn.gov.pl/en/digital-resources/articles/9254,The-first-female-courier-from-Poznan.html>

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The first female courier from Poznań

On 1 November 1939 the first female courier from the Poznań conspiracy set out on a mission to reach the Polish government-in-exile in France. It is difficult to imagine the hardships and challenges that she had to face on the road in autumn 1939. Nonetheless, on 5 December, the brave girl reached Paris.





Podróż z Dolnej do Franji

11. XI. 1939. wyjazd z Poznania

12. XI. - Kraków, wyjazd do
Przemysła. W piątku w ręk-
kawce Mieszka, wózek i młoty
Spółkarnia Wasja: Michasia,

13. XI. Przemysł. Prekarnia koto młoty
Mieszka w mieszkaniu po
zosi.

14. XI. 9 godzin mechanicznie koto młoty

15. XI. Przejście granicy Lubów

16-21 - Lubów

21. XI. - Wyjazd z Lubowa. Wózek,
Siedziwone przejście przez polskie
Woleg w przysmyśle,

22. XI. Doleg w polsce na K.
Ouchiwane

23. XI. Rannica, Wkręcanie sta-
Spółkarnia w koto młoty i dory-
żny ps. Wyjście w dory, spł-
karnia z symulacją. Tędy
dory. Słisko, strona, pólki
koto młoty, Słisko. Wanostrzawie
młoty. Włokha. Granica.
Biażdanie w ciemnościach. Dorykto
w koto

24. XI. Przejście w dory, pólki
Kubanku. Włokha. Gósin

d.c. wyciągu z raportu D.A. Sulezawskiej, z dn. 11.XI.39r.

nia jej w banku i wypłaca się każdemu tylko 100 zł tygodniowo. Od
ra się całą gotówkę temu, u kogo znajdzie się więcej niż 100 zł.

Ponizanie Polaków.

Na każdym kroku Polacy są przez władze niemieckie ponizani
traktowani jak istoty niższego gatunku, jeśli nie wprost jako nie-
wolnicy.

W szeregu miejscowości rozplakatowano zarządzenie, zawierające
m.in. przepisy następujące:

1) Wszyscy mężczyźni Polacy obowiązani są zdejmować nakry-
 głowy przed oficerami niemieckimi oraz przed osobami cywilnymi na-
 rodowości niemieckiej, o ile wyróżniają się jakąś odznaką (przepa-
 na ramienia itp.).

2) Wszyscy Polacy muszą ustępować z drogi Niemcom. W Toruni
 i innych miejscowościach wydano zarządzenie, że chodniki przeznaczo-
 ne są tylko dla Niemców; Polacy muszą chodzić jeźdźnia.

3) Na targach prawo pierwszeństwa kupna mają osoby narodo-
 wości niemieckiej, dopiero po zaspokojeniu ich potrzeb mogą kupować
 Polacy.

4) Pierwszeństwo kupna w sklepach i składach mają żołnierze
 niemieccy i osoby cywilne narodowości niemieckiej, którzy nie po-
 trzebują stawać w ogonkach przeznaczonych dla Polaków. Niektóre
 rzeczy sprzedaje się tylko Niemcom (szynka, słonina). Często Polakom
 nie wydaje się w ogóle kart żywnościowych.

5) Wszyscy Polacy, którzy nie zrozumieli jeszcze różnicy,
 jaka zachodzi pomiędzy zwycięzcami a zwyciężonymi, zostaną przy-
 kładnie ukarani.

Łódź 27. IX. 1939.

Lasiniedzenie

*Wniemyam zasiniaderany si p. Świeżawska Anna.
pracowata w aut. szpitalu jako siostka pogotowia J.C. Sz.
od dn. 6. IX. 1939 do dn. 27. IX. 1939 r.*

[Signature]
Dr. Z. NAMITIUS
LEITENDER ARZT
NACZELNY LEKARZ

On 11 November 1939 the first female courier from the Poznań conspiracy set out on a mission to reach the Polish government-in-exile in France. It is difficult to imagine the hardships and challenges that she had to face on the road in autumn 1939. Nonetheless, on 5 December, the brave girl reached Paris.

Anna Świeżawska, a graduate of the Polish philology in Poznań, worked as a proof-reader in the St. Wojciech Editorial in Poznań. By the end of August, 1939 she was enlisted to the military hospital in Łódź as a nurse (she had a year of training in the Polish Red Cross). When she returned to Poznań, following the September defeat, she learned that the institution where she used to work had been terminated and their equipment confiscated. An unimaginable terror ruled everywhere. At the same time, news arrived of the Polish army and authorities organizing in France. Anna considered leaving the occupied country. She told about her plans to her friend from work, editor Kirył

Sosnowski. He then offered her a courier mission for the newly created underground organization. Anna didn't think twice and swore a conspiracy oath a few days later.

Preparations for the mission

Organization "Fatherland" was established at the end of September, 1939 from the inspiration of pr. prelate Józef Prądzyński, which aimed at bringing social aid and conducting secret intelligence, archives and educational activities. At first, it was intended to operate at the western Polish lands joined to the Third Reich, but since 1940 it also included the communities deported to the General Governance. The news of the creation of Gen. Sikorski's government in France motivated the underground organization to make contact as quickly as possible.

In autumn of 1939, "Fatherland" had no legal division nor any technical capabilities to ensure relative safety for the transport of conspiracy post. It was decided that Anna would try to apply to the occupying forces for documents required to visit her family in Lviv (at the time under Soviet occupation). Soon, her efforts ended with success.

The director of the informative-archives division of the "Fatherland", Kirił Sosnowski codename "Konrad", prepared a situation report. The female courier had to memorize all of it. Her mission was to reach Marian Seyda, a prominent Poznań activist of the National Party who became a minister in the Polish government in France.

The organization provided her with a five pound coin which she sowed

into her clothes. Just before her departure pr. Prądzyński held a holy mass in the intention of the success of her mission.

The route

Her road led through Wrocław (Breslau at the time) and Kraków, up to Przemyśl. At the border of the Soviet occupation, it turned out that only the trains taking Polish soldiers returning from German imprisonment were allowed to pass. Luckily, Świeżawska had a certificate from a military doctor in Łódź. On 16 November with the POW transport she reached Lviv where her uncle Adam Świeżawski lived. The further road led her to Vorokhta and then, with a guide, through the Carpathian Mountains to Hungary. From Lviv she set out on 21 November.

Here are some significant episodes from her further journey:

In the night, after we left Stanisławowo, passenger control was taking place in the entire train, since it turned out we needed some sort of pass. I had none. When the militia came to my compartment I pretended to be asleep. They checked everyone, but hadn't noticed me at all. [...] Upon arrival to Vorokhta, at the exit ramp — another, very thorough pass check. They arrest a number of people [...] I come up — no one looks at me, no one sees me. I walk past them like a ghost, without any control.

She crossed the Hungarian border on the night from 23 to 24 November. "It was slippery, steep, barbed wire fences and lots of snow. Shouts of the militia. Escape. Wandering in the dark. Fire in the

woods. Going down the Kukulu slope". On 25 November, she reached Budapest. She risked it at the local Polish embassy and directly admitted to being a courier. She immediately got her passport extended and received appropriate visas.

At a Polish minister in Paris

She was welcomed in Paris by Marian Seyda on 5 December. The minister approached the unknown girl who claimed to have brought important information from Poznań conspirators with reserve. Then, Anna told him who kept the lock of his son's hair. It was the family secret, given to her before she had left Poznań and which was known only by Seyda's closest ones, which broke the distrust.

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The following day, she wrote the first report from Poznań from memory. It included news not only from Greater Poland, but also from Pomorze district. It informed on, among other things, arrests, revisions, confiscation of agricultural and regular households, freezing of bank accounts and general repressions and humiliation of Poles. The attitude of the Polish society was described as dignified and fully prepared to fight for the regaining of independence.

This is how the foundations for the Underground were laid

Establishing contact by the Poznań conspirators with the government in France was of huge importance. One of the consequences was the appointing of priest prelate Prądzyński as the man of trust of the government at the lands joined to the Third Reich with the mission to form an agreement between political parties and appoint a candidate for the Chief Delegate of the Government for this region.

Świeżawska, who travelled with her own passport, couldn't return to the country. In turn, a previously chosen announcement was broadcast through radio informing Poznań of the success of her mission and the need to send another courier. It broadcast as follows: "Zosia arrived happily and is awaiting her sister". From that moment on, female couriers from Poznań were using the nickname "Zosia's Sister".

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