



Seal of the District Office of Public Security in Tomaszów Lubelski
source: Institute of National Remembrance in Lublin

The exhibition presented in the Chamber of Communist Terror Memory depicts the history of the formation of communist power in the Tomaszów County after 1944, as well as the structure and activities of the District Office of Public Security in Tomaszów Lubelski, with particular emphasis on communist terror against opponents of the people's government.



Plaque commemorating lieutenant Jan Leonowicz "Burta"
project: "My Brand" Artistic Workshop Piotr Prus



Excerpt from the exhibition at the Communist Terror Memorial Chamber



CHAMBER OF COMMUNIST TERROR MEMORY IN TOMASZOW LUBELSKI LWOWSKA 64 STREET

ENTRY FREE

OPENING HOURS:
TUESDAY - SATURDAY 11 A.M - 15 P.M.
SUNDAY - MONDAY CLOSED

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Ministerstwo Kultury
i Dziedzictwa Narodowego

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Muzeum Regionalne
im. dr. Janusza Petera w Tomaszowie Lubelskim

Regional Museum in Tomaszów Lubelski is a self-governing cultural institution of the Tomaszów Poviát



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CHAMBER OF COMMUNIST TERROR MEMORY



PLACE OF TERROR, PLACE OF MEMORY

The exhibition begins with an explanation of the concept of "communism" and highlights the Soviet Union as the source of the expansion of communist ideas throughout Europe. In this section, special emphasis is placed on the history of World War II, especially the pivotal year of 1944, when the Soviets entered the territory of pre-war Poland. The subsequent part of the exhibition presents the course of Operation "Burza" (Storm) in the Lublin region. Operation "Burza" was a military operation organized and carried out by units of the Home Army against German forces just before the entry of the Red Army, and later in cooperation with the Soviets. Reproductions of photographs displayed in the exhibition depict members of the Eastern Team of the Tomaszów AK District, who fought in the southeastern part of the Lublin region against the Germans and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) in the first half of 1944.

Piotr Woźnicki "Czarny Piotrus" and Wacław Smoła "Przedwojowiec", 1944



The consequence of the failure of Operation "Burza" was the gradual takeover of power by supporters of communism who entered with the Red Army. A key moment for legitimizing communist power in Poland was the proclamation of the Manifesto of the Polish Committee of National Liberation (PKWN) on July 22, 1944. This document declared that the only legal authority in Poland was the National Council of Poland, and the government-in-exile was referred to as "self-proclaimed." Following the establishment of the National Council, national councils began to form in each county, municipality, and city. In Tomaszów Lubelski, elections to the county, municipal, and city national councils were held on August 10-13, 1944, with the participation of PKWN representatives Captain Teodor Duda and Lieutenant Janina Żurek.

An important aspect of the establishment of communist authorities in Poland was the fight against opponents of the new order. These opponents were primarily former soldiers of the Home Army (AK), Peasant Battalions (BCh), the Delegation of Armed Forces, and the Association for Freedom and Independence, who decided to continue the struggle for a truly free and independent Poland not under the influence of Soviet Russia.

The southeastern part of the Lublin region presented exceptionally strong resistance to the new political regime. It was in this area in August 1944 that the first District Offices of Public Security were established, which were local units of the Ministry of Public Security. The District Offices of Public Security were primarily tasked with identifying and eliminating opponents of communist rule. This included primarily guerrilla fighters hiding in the forests, but also representatives of the only legal opposition, the Polish People's Party, as well as the influential Catholic Church. From 1944 to 1956, there was an exceptionally strong surveillance campaign conducted by the Offices of Public Security in these environments.



Rally in front of the district assembly building in Tomaszów Lubelski, August 13, 1944. Source: Tomaszów Lubelski Regional Museum



District Office of Public Security in Tomaszów Lubelski in the "Cybulówka" building. Source: Tomaszów Lubelski Regional Museum

After July 1944, many experienced and determined soldiers who continued to fight against the communists remained in hiding in the Tomaszów Lubelski area. Some of these individuals included Jan Leonowicz "Burta," Stefan Kobos "Wrzos," Karol Kostecki "Kostek," and Jan Turzyniecki "Mogiłka." Their activities mainly involved disarming MO (Citizens' Militia) and ORMO (Voluntary Reserve Militia) posts, intimidating the most active communist activists - officials, activists, agents, and informers. Another significant challenge in these areas was the presence of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) guerrillas, and the fact that Ukrainians were willingly joining the ranks of the Polish United Workers' Party (PPR), UB (Security Service), and ORMO.

A crucial moment in the communists' rise to power was the referendum on June 30, 1946, and the elections on January 19, 1947. The pre-election period was a battleground for brutal confrontations with the only opposition party to the Polish Workers' Party (PPR), which was the Polish People's Party led by Stanisław Mikołajczyk. The communist authorities recognized that Lubelszczyzna was one of the most threatened regions in the entire country due to the broad support of the population for the PSL and the high activity of underground organizations. Consequently, intensified efforts were made to shape the "appropriate" attitudes of the region's inhabitants, combined with actions to eliminate opposition members from the lists of People's Bloc candidates and even their physical liquidation.

The PSL members were encouraged to leave Mikołajczyk's party or were persuaded to cooperate with the security apparatus. Large-scale support rallies for the Polish Workers' Party were held to weaken the morale of PSL voters. These actions, along with election fraud on January 19, 1947, resulted in victory for the Democratic Bloc coalition.