

Institute of National Remembrance

<https://ipn.gov.pl/en/news/233,Exhibition-The-faces-of-Security-Service-Twarze-bezpieki.html>

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Exhibition “The faces of Security Service” (Twarze bezpieki)

On 22nd of July Janusz Kurtyka, President of IPN, opened in Warsaw an open-air exhibition which shows 120 high rank officers of security services from all major towns in Poland. The photos and biographic notes are presented in a symbolic place, in Ujazdowskie Avenue vis a vis the building which until the mid 50s was the headquarters of Ministry of Public Security.

The exhibition is open till the end of August.

✘ Since 1944 till 1990 the functionaries of security services constituted “the armed arm of the communist party”. The main goal of the services was to protect the communists from the society and to eliminate opposition.

History of “Bezpieka¹⁾” - Security Service in Poland

First, the Security Services operated within Ministry of Public Security which was created in summer 1944. The executive staff of the Ministry had been trained in NKVD school in Kuibyshev (USSR). Apart from the central office, the “soviet advisers” were sent to all newly-created regional Offices of Public Security in all Poland.

The official activity of the Ministry of Public Security started on January 1, 1945 and it’s wide range of power was not limited by law. The Ministry focused on achieving goals set by the Polish Workers’ Party (PPR) and later Polish United Workers’ Party (PZPR). At the peak of its expansion in 1953 there were 33 thousands functionaries working within the ministry structures. Additionally, a net of 73 thousands of informers (in the mid of 50s) collaborated with the ministry. The informers were recruited by means of brutal intimidation or promises of financial profits. Nevertheless, some of the informers, especially members of the communist party, volunteered for the work.

Offices of Public Security and their informants kept under surveillance the political parties, national and local public administration, social and religious organizations, workers of factories and in general, the social attitudes. One third of the adult Poles were registered in the ministry’s files because they

constituted "a dubious element".

The security system tottered when Józef Światło, high rank officer of the ministry who escaped to the West, revealed its methods and its criminal character.

In 1954 the Ministry of Public Security was replaced by Ministry of Interior Affairs (MSW) and Committee of Public Security Affairs. In 1956 the Committee was liquidated and its competences and staff transferred to the Ministry of Interior Affairs.

The Security Service (SB) operated in Poland since 1956 till 1990. The fall of communist system in Poland in 1989 brought an end to the existence of this political police and organ of terror, which was hostile to the Polish society during all its existence.

Today, the 45 years of activity of the Polish security services is subject of interest of historians and justice department. We already know that security services achieved its mean goals: the independence underground movement as well as legal political opposition were crushed, Polish elite was exterminated, Polish catholic church was under constant attack, and over 5 thousands Poles were sentenced to death in accordance with the repressive law.

Exhibition

Preserving the memory of the victims of the security services brings the question about the identity of the persecutors. Therefore, the Institute of National Remembrance organized exhibition thanks to which the functionaries of "bezpieka" are no longer anonymous.

The idea of the exhibition "Faces of security service" is to show the identity of the officers of the local security service. Therefore, the local branches of IPN organize its local version of the exhibition basing on their own archival resources. The project covers all Poland.

The schedule of the exhibitions within the project "Twarze bezpieki"- "The Faces of Security Service" (opening dates):

- „Twarze krakowskiej bezpieki” – Kraków, March 2, 2006
- „Twarze wrocławskiej bezpieki” – Wrocław, July 22, 2006
- „Twarze bydgoskiej bezpieki 1945–1990” – Bydgoszcz, December 22, 2006.
- „Twarze łódzkiej bezpieki” – Łódź, January 23, 2007
- „Twarze katowickiej bezpieki” – Katowice, March 30, 2007
- „Serca dla partii bijące. Ludzie gdańskiej bezpieki” – Gdańsk, April 13, 2007

- „Twarze warszawskiej bezpieki” – Warszawa, April 27, 2007
- „Twarze toruńskiej bezpieki 1945–1990” – Toruń, May 3, 2007
- „Twarze sądeckiej bezpieki” – Nowy Sącz, May 10, 2007
- „Twarze opolskiej bezpieki” – Opole, May 28, 2007
- „Twarze rzeszowskiej bezpieki” – Rzeszów, June 1, 2007
- „Twarze poznańskiej bezpieki” – Poznań, June 5, 2007
- „Twarze kieleckiej bezpieki” – Kielce, June 11, 2007
- „Twarze białostockiej bezpieki” – Białystok, June 17, 2007
- „Twarze szczecińskiej bezpieki” – Szczecin, June 20, 2007
- „Twarze olsztyńskiej bezpieki” – Olsztyn, June 21, 2007
- „Twarze lubelskiej bezpieki” – Lublin, June 29, 2007
- „Twarze bezpieki” – Warsaw, July 22, 2007

You will find more information on the Polish site of IPN under [Twarze bezpieki](#) , including texts of the particular catalogues of the exhibitions and books on the subject.

¹⁾ Bezpieka – common name for security service

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