

Institute of National Remembrance

<https://ipn.gov.pl/en/news/7034,8-Strzelecka-Street-a-testimony-to-communist-terror.html>

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8 Strzelecka Street - a testimony to communist terror



This short video explains what the building in Strzelecka Street was, what happened there, and why it is important to preserve the memory of people who suffered and died in that nondescript tenement house during the first years of the communist rule in Poland. Today, the museum established in it stands for hundreds of similar buildings whose walls witnessed the enforcement of an unwanted system, and the installation of a regime that needed terror to break resistance.

The tenement house at the corner of Strzelecka Street and Śródkowa Street was built in the years 1936-1937. It was owned by Zygmunt Jórski. It had a very solid construction with reinforced concrete ceilings and extensive basements, especially those overlooking Strzelecka Street. Originally, three floors and three entrance gates to the courtyard were built. At the outbreak of World War II the building was still under construction. During German occupation, it was inhabited by squatters, who used individual flats until Red Army troops entered Warsaw.

The tenement house in Strzelecka Street was affected neither during the Warsaw Uprising, nor during the fighting for the Praga district in September 1944.

At the turn of 1944 and 1945, it ceased to be an ordinary residential building, being taken over by the Soviet special services. In the winter of 1945, it was used as one of the quarters by General Ivan Serov - Deputy People's Commissar of the NKVD, and from January 1945 the representative of the NKVD with the 1st Belorussian Front.

Formally, from 20 February 1945, the building became the seat of the Provincial Office of Public Security in Warsaw. The flats on the first, second and third floor overlooking Strzelecka Street were converted into interrogation rooms. Twenty-five basements previously used as pantries were converted into a detention centre. Two closets under the stairs (without ventilation, lights or windows) were changed to solitary

confinement cells. Due to very large number of detainees, the flats on the ground floor were also used as prison cells.

In the years 1945–1948 many thousands of those arrested – mainly from the circles of the Polish independence underground – were imprisoned there. An unknown number lost their lives as a result of torture by NKVD and Public Security officers. The previously quiet yard resounded with the cries of the tortured.

In October 1948, at the request of the Ministry of Public Security, the Warsaw Metropolitan Council deprived Z. Jórski of the ownership of the tenement house at 8 Strzelecka Street. It became an ordinary residential building again, but this time for the officers of the communist security apparatus.

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