

Institute of National Remembrance

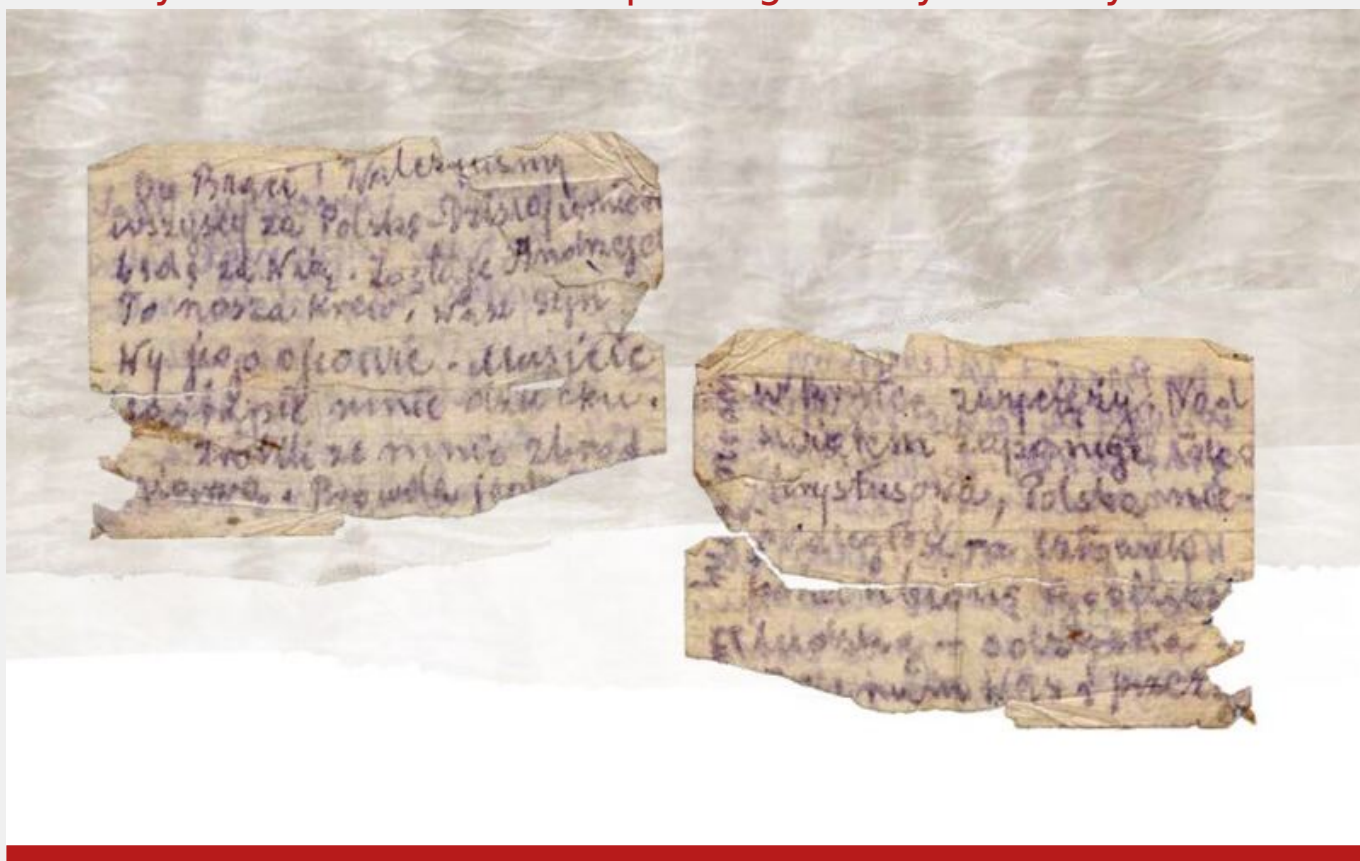
<https://ipn.gov.pl/en/news/7120,Col-Lukasz-Cieplinski-kites-from-communist-prison.html>

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Col. Łukasz Ciepliński' kites from communist prison

"I fear these words might be the last you'll hear from me. One of these days I am to be murdered by the communists for pursuing the very ideals that I am now passing on to you as my last will."



Fighting the Germans and the Soviets

Col. Łukasz Ciepliński, a career officer before the war, in September 1939 distinguished himself with exceptional gallantry, and then sneaked to Hungary to receive instructions for underground work. On

his return, he was imprisoned by the Germans but escaped; subsequently, he went on to build in the South of occupied Poland one of the most efficient and successful districts of ZWZ, Union of Armed Struggle, the resistance organization that would become the Home Army. For over four years his people gathered information, spread propaganda, attacked the German authorities and protected the local population. Finally, as part of "Operation Tempest " in mid-1944, they helped the Red Army overcome the Wehrmacht in the region, hoping that the Soviets would respect them as the rightful representation of their government in London.

However, post-WWII Poland, released from the German occupation, immediately became the target of the Soviet stranglehold, with the ruling Polish communists assisted by the Red Army and NKVD. Thousands of underground members, until then fighting the Third Reich, refused to abandon the government in exile and surrender to the new authorities that they saw as impostors. Since the Home Army, the largest such formation in Poland, had been dissolved, the void was filled with other organizations, of which Wolność i Niezawisłość [Freedom and Independence] was the most important. Its goal was a western model of state, with the citizens guaranteed freedom of speech and the right to decide the country's shape, political system and future in democratic elections.

Formally, the new union was to oppose the communist by peaceful means only, though it soon proved impossible: the adversary, who had taken power by force, was openly hostile, equipped with a huge

repression apparatus, and determined to stamp the opposition with violence. Organizationally, WiN recreated the Home Army structure, despite replacing their ranks with civilian management titles.

Politically, the leaders matured quickly: they saw the uselessness of open fight against the overwhelming enemy forces, and invested their efforts in gathering information and propaganda. To these ends, the 4th head of the organization, Col. Łukasz Ciepliński, intensified the intelligence operations, strengthened the ties with the West, closely cooperated with the clergy, and contacted the socialists, warning them about the communist party's strategy. All these efforts brought WiN in the centre of the security services' attention, which translated into a wave of arrests that crippled the organization. Łukasz Ciepliński was apprehended in late November 1947.

Waiting for death and writing

Next came over three years of interrogations by Ministry of Public Security's officers, who used intimidation, threats and torture, followed by a trial that brought death sentences for most of WiN leaders. In the five months between the verdict and the execution, Colonel Ciepliński smuggled dozens of kites from his overcrowded cell, relating grim prison experiences and leaving his legacy and instructions for the family.

New Year's Day 1951. I'm standing at the turn of two half-centuries, two years, and my own life. What the past year gave us we know all too well; the question is what the new one will bring. I'm here, on the death row, with 40 people, all convicts like me. Every now and then, someone is taken away. My time is coming, yet I'm perfectly calm. The last thing I'll tell my fellow inmates when they come for me is that I'm a Catholic happy to die for his faith, a Pole happy to die for his country, and a man happy to die for truth and justice. More than ever I believe that Christ will be victorious, Poland independent again, and human dignity restored.

Andrzejek! Love your God and remain a good Catholic - while seeking to find out His Will, accept it as the Truth, and live by it. Love Poland, and always think of what's good for her. She must take her rightful place in the world, achieve prosperity and well-being for all of its citizens . . . I fear these words might be the last you'll hear from me. One of these days I am to be murdered by the communists for pursuing the very ideals that I am now passing on to you as my last will."

I feel like my strength is waning, can't look at what's happening here, can't listen to the cries of people being murdered, can't stand this devil's realm anymore. I feel sorry for you too, and in the last moments of my life I will be with you, grateful to God for giving you, Wisia, to Andrzejek.

Andrzejek! Only three things are sacred in life: your God, Country, and Mother.

On 1 March 1951, Col. Łukasz Ciepliński and six other WiN leaders were murdered with a shot to the back of the head in the Warsaw Mokotów Prison, and then buried in a nameless grave.



Read more about WiN [Freedom and Independence] underground organization [here](#).

In 2020, the Institute of National Remembrance released a compilation of Col. Ciepliński's kites.

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