

Institute of National Remembrance

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The screening of the documentary film
„Podkarpacki wrzesień” [Subcarpathian September]
(online) - Rzeszów, 23 September 2021



















The screening will be accompanied by a meeting of the President of the IPN Karol Nawrocki, Ph.D. with young people, representatives of the Subcarpathian Voivode Veterans Council and representatives of the col. Łukasz Ciepliński Historical Club. The event will also be attended by Ewa Leniart, Ph.D., the Subcarpathian Voivode.

The documentary film was produced by the IPN's Branch in Rzeszów in cooperation with TVP Rzeszów. It deals with the topic of the September 1939 campaign in the Subcarpathian region.

'Subcarpathian September' is about a just war and the pure intentions of the Polish nation which defended its independence - commented the President of the IPN Karol Nawrocki on the documentary film screened in Rzeszów.

What started with the shots at Westerplatte in 1939 was a barbaric crime which resulted from the agreement of two equally terrifying totalitarian regimes: Soviet communism and German Nazism - added the President of the IPN.

Today Poland does not require from us - citizens of a free, independent and sovereign country - to fight and die in its defence. It is, however, our obligation to cultivate the memory of our heroes and care for our Homeland in both a historical and economic sense - emphasized the President of the IPN.

The war in Poland's Subcarpathian region began with the German bombing of the airfields in Krosno and Moderówka near Jasło on 1 September 1939, which killed an officer and 20 cadets of the Air Force Non-Com School for underage students.

The defence of southern Poland and the Central Industrial Region was the responsibility of the "Karpaty" ["Carpathians"] Army, which faced the enemy advancing from two directions: the Wehrmacht from the west, and the Slovak troops from the south. The former immediately employed the total war tactics, carpet-bombing not military installations, but civilian facilities and refugee columns fleeing the frontline. 13-year-old Ludwik Misiek remembers, "German He-111 bombers massacred our transport: 116 women and children died. It was horrible when they dropped their bombs and then machine-gunned children running into cornfields and baby trolleys."

The first unit to be alerted was the 10th Cavalry Brigade under Col. Stanisław Maczek, whose veteran Vickers tanks faced German armoured formations south of Cracow, at Jordanowo, Kasina and Dobczyce. The enemy advanced fast, forcing the army to move its headquarters from Rzeszów to Przemyśl. The CO ordered his troops to hold the line on Wisłoka and San rivers, but the defence was broken, and Wehrmacht formations soon captured Jarosław and Przemyśl.

One of the bloodiest battles of the defensive war took place on 12 September near Bircza; on 15 September, 21st Light Infantry Division was defeated at Oleszyce and its CO, general Kustroń, killed, and between 18 and 20 September, after the Soviet invasion, Tomaszów Lubelski saw the last confrontation with the Wehrmacht in the Subcarpathian region, a battle that ended in Polish surrender.



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.

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.

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.

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

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

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