

Project in Posterum

(Preserving the past for the future)

By: *Marek Jan Chodakiewicz:*

The Dialectics of Pain: (IV)

The Interrogation Methods of the Communist Secret Police in Poland, 1944-1955. Glaukopis, vol. 2/3 (2004-2005).

In 1948 in Starachowice UB Lieutenant Marian N. tied up and suspended naked from the ceiling more than a dozen AK and WiN soldiers whom he tortured. Aleksander W., Henryk K., Marian P., Tadeusz M., Zdzisław M., Paweł S., Zbigniew I., Jan T., Zygfryd K., Mieczysław T., Mieczysław W., Aleksander K., Jan M. and others were also beaten with a truncheon and a chair, deprived of food and sleep, forced to sit on a leg of an upturned chair, and tied with a wire to a window. The UB officer also jammed needles under their fingernails. As a result, some of them confessed to their crimes and were subsequently sentenced by a Communist court. At least four of them received the death penalty and were shot. [113]

In April 1948, the secret police seized AK -WiN post commander Franciszek Słowik ("Smola") of Chwałowice near Tarnobrzeg. Słowik, who was also a populist activist (PSL), recalled his experience as follows: The prison cells of the Tarnobrzeg UB were simply moldy and damp basements and dungeons without any windows or beds. One slept on the cement. There was a barrel in the corner where one relieved oneself. It was emptied every few days. One had trouble breathing because of the stench and odor of the wet and unventilated prison cells as well as the smell of the decomposing feces. The screams and moans of the individuals tortured and maltreated under interrogation caused us to cower in the corner stressfully awaiting our own turn to be tortured. Our daily allotment of food consisted of a piece of plain bread, half a liter of coffee, and a helping of rye kasha that we had to eat out of an old tin can.... We had no spoons at all. I spent five long weeks in the dungeons of the UB in Tarnobrzeg... I was subjected to brutal and even sadistic interrogation. Beating was a daily occurrence. Often the UB men applied an ingenious torture to me, for instance, the so-called 'riding like Anders' [jazda na Andersa]. It went as follows: the interrogated person was stripped naked and placed upon the leg of an upturned stool. So this was quite like in medieval times – one was impaled. Also, two or three secret policemen would get on me and beat the soles of my feet with a rubber truncheon or a wooden stick. The interrogators and their subordinates also specialized in beating the genitals..., tearing off fingernails, and crushing fingers. After each interrogation the victim was unable to return to the cell on his own. I still remember the names of some of the torturers: Sikora, Świdzki, Chudzik..., [and] Tworek.... After five weeks of relentless interrogation and torture, I confessed to everything they accused me of. [114]

Jan Wyszynski ("Jędrus") fought in the insurgent "Huzar" unit. The secret police attempted to force Wyszynski's brother Józef to reveal the whereabouts of the insurgents, according to him.

In 1948 I was arrested once again on account of the AK, because I knew where the partisans were hiding. The interrogation started. They stripped me naked, beat me unconscious with sticks, and kicked me. One of the Polish officers, or rather officers wearing Polish uniforms, sat on my head, and another on my legs.... On April 10, 1948, acting on the orders of [Russian] Lieutenant [Jan] Aleksiej, the KBW dismantled and destroyed our entire farmstead in Lubowicz: the house, shed, pigsty, granary, and barn. [115] In April 1948, a secret police trooper forced a 12-year-old child to reveal the hiding place of his insurgent brother. On May 1, 1948, the KBW discovered weapons hidden at a farmstead in Radziszewo-Sieńczuchy. They tortured Mr. Komorowski. Although innocent, he was forced to denounce the owner of the secret cache. On May 22, 1948, following a fire fight, the police

troops wounded and captured Tadeusz Domżański ("Rekrut"). He was tortured and denounced a number of insurgent supporters. Nonetheless, on July 15, 1948, he was sentenced to death and later shot. [116]

In 1948, the UB arrested Józef and Stanisław Naumiuk along with their father of Czeberaki near Parzew. All three had been AK soldiers during the war and later joined the WiN. The Naumiuks were tortured horribly at the UB headquarters in Radzyń Podlaski: I even sat on an electric chair with some sort of an apparatus. They attached clamps to my hand and ear. Once they turned it on, blood flowed from every crevice in my body... They also pumped water into me. They suspended me upside down from a beam attached to the ceiling. They gagged my mouth and dunked my face in a bucket full of water. And I would freeze. They told me only to give them a sign that I had hidden weapons. When I did, they freed me and told me to sign my confession. I'd tear them up. So they continued to torture me. They poured kerosene into my brother's bucket [before they dunked his head in]. In comparison to that the beating all over one's body was pleasure. [117]

Józef Naumiuk persevered but his brother Stanisław broke down and confessed to having cached weapons for the insurgents. He was promptly tried and shot as a "bandit."

During several days in late July 1948 alone, the UB men interrogated Second Lieutenant Henryk Wieliczko ("Lufa") of the "Łupaszko" unit 22 times. Sometimes the torture sessions took place twice daily. After half a year of torture, the insurgent officer broke down, revealed at least 50 hiding places (meliny) of his civilian confederates, and confessed his own "crimes." However, Wieliczko refused to denounce any of his living comrades-in-arms. He was tried and sentenced to death on December 9, 1948. He was shot on March 14, 1949. [118]

At the end of 1948 the UB arrested Witold Orczyk ("Lipski") of the Union of Armed Struggle [Związek Walki Zbrojnej – ZWZ], Peasant Battalions [Bataliony Chłopskie – BCh], and, finally, WiN. He commanded the Słozów post near Cracow. On January 19, 1949, Orczyk was brought back to his farmstead. According to his recollections, my neighbors were forced at gunpoint to come to the farmstead. They were to tear off the roof from all the buildings. The pretext was to search for weapons and ammunition in the straw roofs.... The UB officer Siekiera smashed the floor in the kitchen and the living room and broke the windows and window frames with an ax. Another one climbed up to the attic and smashed the wooden ceiling with a hatchet.... At that point a provocation took place. The adjutant of Colonel [Teodor] Duda came up to me and showing me a piece of paper asked: 'Do you know this?' 'I do not know what this is,' I responded. 'This is an identification card of a female Soviet parachutist, whom you murdered, and you hid her ID in your roof! Where did you bury the body? Talk!', he commanded hitting my face. They threw me to the floor and began beating me with an iron fire-poker all over my body, on the soles of my feet in particular. After a while, they lifted me up, yelling: 'Where did you bury her?' When I regained my senses, I asked: 'What kind of a parachutist carries an ID on her?...' 'You are so smart,' he yelled, while hitting my face. [119]

Between April 1948 and April 1949, the secret police arrested 48 members of the underground Polish Military Organization (Polska Organizacja Wojskowa – POW). UB functionary Wilhelm A. tortured six of them in Sławno, Darłowo, and the adjacent localities. Torture included sleep deprivation, beating, and forcing the victims to sit on the upturned leg of a stool. [120]

Izabella Kochanowska ("Iza") served as a medic and liaison both in the AK-WiN "Zapora" unit and in the NSZ company under Captain Waclaw Piotrowski ("Cichy") in the Lublin area. She was arrested on May 1, 1949. "Iza survived horrible interrogation sessions. She confessed nothing. She gave no one away." Kochanowska was sentenced to six years. [121]

Between March and July 1949, two

insurgents, Józef Olek and Stanisław Rydzewski, were beaten by the UB until they confessed to a murder they did not commit. This was done so that they and their commander, Roman Szczur ("Urszula"), could be tried as common bandits and executed in infamy. [122]

In the summer of 1949, the UB captured Father Władysław Gurgacz and his underground soldiers. They were tortured horribly; most confessed to their "crimes." Father Gurgacz chose to incriminate mostly himself to spare his followers. He was sentenced to death and shot on September 14, 1949. [123]

From September 19 to December 19, 1949, secret police officer Janusz B. of Łębork tortured mercilessly teenage members of the Polish Underground Scouting organization (Polski Skauting Podziemny). "During multiple-hour night interrogation sessions he beat his victims all over their bodies, especially on their heads, while cursing them and threatening to kill them." Likewise, secret police officer Jan L. meted out a similar treatment to the arrested members of the secret group "Lech" of the Home Army in Kłodzko near Wrocław. [124]

Between October 1949 and April 1950, in Jarocin UB, Second Lieutenant Adam G. beat on the calves and soles of their feet Henryk A., Edward P., Marian B., and Wincenty J., who as members of the underground youth group White Rose (Biała Róża) had disseminated anti-Communist leaflets. The UB man also forced them to sit on the upturned leg of a stool. [125]

In 1949, Tadeusz Kopański joined the underground Union of Active Struggle (Związek Walki Czynnej) in Cracow, which was a part of the Insurgent Army (Armia Powstańcza) in Wolbrom. He was arrested in 1950 and was subject to torture during numerous interrogation sessions at the UB headquarters at Monteluppi Street in Cracow, in Wronki prison, and in Jaworzno, a hard labor camp. According to Kopański, "they were beating me. I was forced to sit on an upturned stool. Its leg went straight into my rectum.... When they rushed into my cell, they beat me so much on my head and ears. I'm completely deaf on one ear and I use a hearing aid for the other. Blood kept flowing from my ears... I urinated blood." To force him to talk, Kopański was also thrust naked into a bunker during the Christmas holidays. Later, having received a 10-year sentence, Kopański (along with other prisoners) was beaten upon his arrival in prison and frequently afterward "for fun" (dla zabawy) in the hard labor camp. The officers responsible for the torture were Krupa, the "Frenchman," and Zieliński. [126]

At the end of the 1940s and in the early 1950s, Major Mieczysław M. of the Military Intelligence in Gdynia tortured at least 22 sailors suspected of being "enemies of the people." He beat them with his fist and a stick, crushed their fingers with a rifle rod, doused them with water, and confined them to a tiny solitary cell where a prisoner was unable to stand up. [127]

In Szczecin in 1949 and 1950, secret policeman Franciszek B. tortured at least two men suspected of underground activities: Waclaw B. and Marian D. [128] Also in Szczecin, between January 25 and February 4, 1951, the secret police arrested 15 members of the Youth Resistance Movement (Młodzieżowy Ruch Oporu – MRO), which had just barely begun functioning in Wolin, Rembertów, Ursus, and Warsaw. All suspects were tortured, forced to confess, and sentenced up to 10 years in jail. The most brutal secret police officer in the MRO case also dealt with a group of teenage scouts: The National Front of Polish Youth (Narodowy Front Młodzieży Polskiej – NFMP). Jan S. for instance "tore the hair out of Stanisław K.'s head, kicked him on the head, and broke his fingers." [129]

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, in Gdynia, the Communist military counterintelligence officer Mikołaj Kulik made sailor Franciszek Branecki stand on one leg for long periods of time. Further, Kulik beat petty officer Tadeusz Korba with a whip and forced sailor Kazimierz Sabadasz to sit on the stool leg and on an

upturned bottle. He also beat sailors Janusz Kumik and Tadeusz Mosiej. (Both were later sentenced to 15 years for having listened to Radio Free Europe.) Tadeusz Rogoziński recalled that after Kulik deprived them of water he and his fellow prisoners were forced to drink their own urine. Mieczysław Albrychowicz testified that Kulik and Lieutenant Mieczysław Mocek suspended him from a beam with his hands tied behind his back. [130] According to Włodzimierz Sobański, who was arrested in May 1949, Kulik immediately addressed me in a vulgar manner and then asked: 'What band did you belong to?' I responded that I belonged to none. He told me that we would see and ordered me to approach him. I came up to his desk and he hit me with the flat of his hand on the ear. Then, he hit me again. So I kicked him. He kicked me back on my stomach. Then the guards led me down to the cell. [131]

Between September 1949 and May 1950, in Bielsk Podlaski, UB Second Lieutenant Paweł T. tortured Szczepan Jan C., who was suspected of supporting the underground. The prisoner was beaten all over his body, deprived of sleep, and forced to sit on the leg of an upturned stool. [132]

Home Army Major Julian Krzewicki was arrested in January 1948 in Gorlice for having passed on to a friend a single anti-Communist leaflet. Released quickly at first, he was rearrested on February 2, 1950. I was interrogated with the use of the most imaginative torture non-stop for 14 days and nights in the Gorlice prison of the UB. The interrogators changed in shifts. I remained sleepless and almost completely without any food. I was beaten on my face and kicked on my legs and my kidneys.... I was often beaten by several tormentors at once.... They wanted me to confess that I belonged to the WiN, collaborated with the Germans, murdered Jews and Soviet prisoners, and hid weapons and ammunition... After 14 days of such torture I was hallucinating and losing consciousness.... Despite the torture, I refused to confess to the crimes I did not commit. Therefore on April 29, 1951, I was released from jail for lack of guilt. [133]

In March 1950 in Gdańsk, the secret police arrested at least a dozen boy scouts, members of the underground Young Poland (Młoda Polska) group. The boys were interrogated non-stop and tortured. For example, Janusz Gielb, whose father, a Home Army soldier, had perished in Auschwitz, was beaten and had his toes crushed with the jackboots of the interrogating officers. Headed by Lieutenant Colonel Jan Amons, the UB men involved in the interrogation were: Edward Solański, Zygmunt Czaja, Leon Kwak, Waclaw Chrustowski, Roman Płużyński, Kazimierz Jackiewicz, Hieronim Wiewióra, Józef Śladewski, and others. [134]

In July 1950, dissident poet Wojciech Bąk was locked up in a psychiatric hospital, where the secret police beat him on the head and, in particular, on the part of his skull wounded during the Second World War. Bąk was never formally charged with any crime. The torture was a punishment for his intended demonstration during a congress of Polish literati, where he threatened to make an anti-Communist and anti-Jewish statement. [135]

For four days straight, between October 22 and 26, 1950, an officer of the Krosno UB, Władysław B., beat Antoni B., while forcing him to do sit-ups and jump up and down. [136]

Between October 24 and 27, 1950, in Elk UB chief Paweł T. tortured Witold S., who was accused of "spreading gossip-propaganda and listening to an American radio program." The man broke down and incriminated his wife, who was involved with the underground. Halina S. was arrested and also broke down under the interrogation which continued non-stop for two days until she either committed suicide or was killed by the UB. [137]

In 1950 in Bochnia, the UB functionary Stanisław B. routinely tormented arrested ex-Home Army soldiers. The torture methods applied included "beating with a rubber truncheon, cable or a steel line on the soles of their feet and elsewhere all over their bodies, hitting them on their heads with the butt of his gun, and threatening death." [138]

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