

## **Office of the Special Commission for Combatting Abuse and Economic Sabotage in the city of Łódź in the years 1945-1954**

The establishment of Special Commission for Combatting Abuse and Economic Sabotage constituted one of the elements of introducing a new policy into the judiciary system. After 1945 new authorities took control over justice, as it had also been the case with the political sphere and their repressive apparatus. In this way, the policy of judicial terror was introduced, with judgments passed in an uncontrolled manner and the shaping of new reality. Fundamental challenges that communists had to face in the field of justice consisted in taking control over judiciary structures and subordinating judges as well as creating new law, together with judicial and quasi-judicial institutions. Special Commission for Combatting Abuse and Economic Sabotage represented such quasi-judicial institution, or rather special administration body of a judicial character. The institution was supposed to take part in building People's Republic of Poland, contribute to fighting opponents and shape the desired economic reality. It was assumed that the Special Commission together with strict legal regulations would liquidate dearness and excessive profits in trade turnover, and in particular private economic initiative. Desired social attitudes were also forced by imposing penalties.

According to its constitutive decree (as of 16 November 1945), Special Commission was authorized to detect and prosecute crimes, conduct investigation and preparatory proceedings, apply preventive measures as well as impose on the perpetrator the punishment of up to 2 years of detention in forced labour camp. Interestingly enough, it had the right to request the cases connected with its scope of activity to be transferred to persecutor's office, court and investigation authorities as well as public security offices. At the same time, it could direct the cases reaching beyond its competencies to courts of appropriate jurisdiction. All state bodies were obliged to cooperate with this institution. The fact that there was no way of appealing the decisions of Special Commission is of particular importance, as its decisions were final and unquestionable. What is more, defendants were deprived of nearly any right to defend themselves.

Special Commission was a central body. Its field work was based on the network of offices organized in particular in the cities constituting regional centres. The offices were active within their regions and represented executive character towards the recommendations of the Commission. It was assumed that they would be created in all cities constituting regional centres and their activity would cover the area of a given region. The Office of the Special Commission for Combatting Abuse and Economic Sabotage in the city of Łódź was

supposed to constitute executive body for the city of Łódź and its region. Interestingly enough, for some time (1948-1950), two offices were active in the city, with one of them responsible for the city and the other for the region. Such solution resulted from a multitude of cases as well as strong position of the city of Łódź. From 1950, the Łódź office combined the competencies of several bodies, getting involved in detecting and investigating crimes and its tools included among others mass control actions. The office would also conduct proceedings (it was authorized to question witnesses, perform inspections etc.) as well as formulate camp conclusions (punishments were imposed by the Headquarters) and supervise judgment execution. After 1950, in turn, it was deprived of its previous rights, but gained individual judiciary functions – punishments were formulated basing on conclusions of the prosecutor or other authorities.

After preparing the propaganda and organizational background, the Łódź office was established on 29 December 1945 and from that moment, its actual organization began. However, its activity started in fact on 7 or 10 January 1946. One of its first actions consisted in informing the society and different institutions about the assumptions of the Commission as well as tasks entrusted to the Łódź office. In spite of the fact that very serious tasks were assigned to the office – combatting post-war speculation and abuse – and the expectations were high, it was not provided with enough resources to achieve the set goals. It is proved by the fact that initially, it was given only four small rooms in the Łódź Regional Court at Dąbrowskiego square. Later, the Łódź office moved to the small palace at 107 Gdańska Street. There were also not enough staff members in the Łódź office and such situation persisted actually throughout the entire period of its functioning.

The field of activity of the office was relatively difficult, but at the same time representing big potential. It was the area of typically industrial character, with a lot of factories, but also rural zones which had their own problems. Crimes investigated by the Łódź office included in particular speculation, abuse in industry as well as white collar offences.

The office was liquidated in 1954 after fulfilling its political tasks. Its aim consisted without any doubt not only in investigating economic crimes, but it was concentrated mainly on fighting private initiative, in particular in the “trade battle” period. It constituted an important element of the authority’s executive apparatus, both on the central as well as local scale. On the local level, it supported state administration and political factors in regulating economic situation as well as would alleviate moods among the society pointing out that speculators, looters, embezzlers etc. were always those to blame for different tensions that used to occur. At the same time, the office became the tool aptly solving problems with

uncomfortable individuals who could be quickly sentenced and eliminated from the society for two years (camp punishment). It all means that the Łódź office constituted a tool of repression and oppression which could be brought to life only in the conditions of a totalitarian state.

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