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THE PROCESS OF COMMEMORATING THE VICTIMS OF WORLD WAR II IN THE AREAS OF THE CURRENT TOMASZOWSKI AND ZAMOŚĆ POVIATS

Summary

The process of commemorating victims of the Second World War, in the area of the present Tomaszów and Zamosc poviats, began in the summer of 1944. It should be emphasized, that from the very beginning of the war, a very important role played in documenting the fate of the fallen soldiers and murdered civilians, was detailed by the Polish Red Cross. This organization was also one of the first to collect the personal data of victims after the end of the German occupation in the Lublin district.

During the war, numerous crimes and deportations to labour, displacement, concentration and extermination camps took place in the area of the present Tomaszów and Zamosc poviats. The inhabitants of these areas, regardless of their nationality, became victims of World War II in great numbers. Nevertheless, it is necessary to underline that the German occupation brought about the extermination of entire Jewish communities in the area of both poviates and in the entire General Gouvernment.

At the beginning of the post-war period, the local government administration, and the Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes, played a very important role in determining both the scale of the crimes committed and securing the burial places. During the first years, efforts were made to exhume the bodies from places not intended for this purpose, such as parks, squares or roadside ditches. This process was significantly hampered by the lack of adequate funds and people willing to do this kind of work.

Organizations that actively participated in the process of commemorating the victims from the end of the 1940s were: the Council for the Protection of Memory of Struggle and Martyrdom and the Union of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy. It should be emphasized that both organizations had periodic breaks in their functioning, and the scope of their activities depended on the historical policy pursued during the communist period in Poland.

After the period of the political transformation in 1989, many previously concealed or forgotten events have been restored into the social memory. The World Union of Home Army Soldiers

and the Polish Union of Former Political Prisoners of Hitler's Prisons and Concentration Camps made particularly great contributions. During the process of commemorating the victims of World War II, in the Tomaszów and Zamosc poviats, monuments were built and other commemorative forms were also built.

This was mainly for people fighting against the German invader and those victims of German displacement actions. However, a special place was occupied by cemeteries and war quarters, as well as the graves of soldiers who died in September 1939. In both poviates, we can also find these monuments as obelisks and plaques commemorating the martyrdom of the Jewish and Romani people, Soviet prisoners of war and the victims of the Ukrainian Uprising Army, as well as Soviet repressions in the East. Commemorations devoted to the martyrdom of the clergy and individual professional groups, such as teachers, are also of key importance.

Commemorations were mainly built in the place where the crime took place or where the camps operated. Often monuments were placed in the centres of individual towns or on the main streets. The interiors of churches and church squares were also an important space for commemorations. However, undertaking a number of initiatives during the democratic period of Poland, this did not fill the public space with the necessary commemorations. Monuments and other types of commemoration are still being created to honour the memory of individuals or groups who lost their lives in tragic circumstances during World War II.