

Justice and politics. The Central Commission for the Investigation of German/ Hitlerite Crimes in Poland 1945-190

The Central Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Poland (*Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Niemieckich w Polsce*) was created by the communist-dominated government in Warsaw in 1945. Commission, which was subjugated to the ministry of justice played crucial role in conducting investigations concerning wide scope of German war crimes committed in Poland, such as: concentration camps, ghettos, mass executions and deportations. Due to political situation after the war the Commission was unable to conduct any investigation about Soviet war crimes.

In 1949, after creation of the two German states, the Main Commission was renamed to Commission for Investigation of Hitlerite Crimes, and its work was put into halt, which meant a decline of post war investigations and trials in Poland.

The Central Commission as well as its local branches, the District Commissions were reactivated in mid 60s. This decision was influenced by many factors and events such as: trial of Adolf Eichmann, the Auschwitz Trial in Frankfurt and propaganda campaign conducted by the East German authorities which aimed to highlight examples of former nazis and war criminals still active in political life of West German. The Central Commission took an active part in this propaganda action using documents from its archive. After events of March 1968 the Commission also took part in “anti-zionist” campaign.

Between 1965 and 1989 the Commission conducted over 12 thousand investigations. Most of the however were suspended without any conclusions. The Commission however gave a valuable input to trials of such war criminals, like e.g. Ludwig Hahn and Josef Blösche. Commission cooperated closely with Zentrale Stelle in Ludwigsburg, West Germany. During this cooperation both institutions exchanged thousands of copies of documents and protocols of testimonies. In some examples however the Commission was unwillingly to help Ludwigsburg.

The Commission was also engaged in negotiations with West Germany concerning compensations for the former prisoners of concentration camps who were victims of medical experiments.

The year 1984 brought a pivotal moment for the Central Commission. This institution was at that time renamed as the Central Commission-Institute of National Remembrance. The new institution was meant to become an important center for World War II research. This ambitious plan however, because of the economic crisis in Poland in the late 80s, remained unrealised.

It was not until Poland regained its full independence, when in the year 1991 the Commission's profile was broadened for investigating Soviet and communist crimes. The Central Commission can therefore be regarded as predecessor of the contemporary Institute of National Remembrance.