



CZESŁAW RYCHLIK

On 20 September 1945 in Warsaw, Judge M. Helfter interviewed the person specified below as a witness. Having advised the witness of the criminal liability for making false declarations and of the wording of Art. 107 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, as well as of the gravity of the oath, the judge swore the witness. The witness testified as follows:

Name and surname	Czesław Rychlik
Age	39
Names of parents	Feliks and Anna
Place of residence	Warszawa Piusa XI Street 2, flat 2
Occupation	electrical technician
Religious affiliation	Roman Catholic
Criminal record	none
Relationship to the parties	victim's husband

Before the war, I worked as an electrical technician in the *Sejm* [Lower Chamber of Polish Parliament] and I lived in one of the *Sejm* buildings. When I came back from a prisoner-of-war camp, I found my wife living in a different flat, but still within the *Sejm* premises. I took up residence with her there.

At the same time, the *Sejm* buildings were seized by the 301st Battalion of SS-*Schutzpolizei*. The Germans left me in the flat I occupied and ordered me to keep working as an electrical technician in that building.

On the anniversary of the November uprising this battalion arrested many Poles in the city, and moreover they arrested all *Sejm* employees (clerks) who were there at that time, that is, who resided within the *Sejm* grounds.



These people were arrested as hostages. Around two hundred people in total were detained this way. These people were taken out of their flats. The Germans kept them in the *Sejm* archive rooms, in the basement. I sneaked to them through sewage ducts and brought them food, warm underwear and so forth.

The Germans kept them there for a week. The detainees did not receive any food or water. Thus they only had what I brought them.

After a week, the Germans released the *Sejm* clerks, but the arrestees "from the city" were herded by the Gestapo to aleja Szucha.

I have forgotten the name of the commander of this SS battalion. Anton Hofman was the quartermaster. The battalion was quartered in *Sejm* until October 1940. Throughout this time the Germans brought twenty to thirty people from the city every day and, without any interrogation, took them to be executed.

They executed them in the morning or during the day. I always tried to be around under the pretext of some electrical technical work, to see how many people they murdered. The Germans did not keep the people brought from the city for longer than two, three hours. Then they usually herded them one after another to the garden slopes, where executions took place in various spots. The Germans always made the victims kneel down. They were not blindfolded. Their hands were not tied.

Usually some Jews, who were brought in advance, dug grave pits for the victims; these Jews were forced to kneel near these pits when the execution was being carried out. Directly after the execution the Germans would order the Jews to throw the corpses into the pits and cover them with earth. They were beaten to make them work faster.

These Jews would be barracked in the *Sejm* for a week. On Saturday they were transported or herded to the ghetto. During the initial period, a new contingent of Jews would be brought from the ghetto every week. This continued until June 1943. At that time a group of Jews was brought in and they lived in the *Sejm* permanently for four months. At the end of September 1943 the building where the Jews lived was surrounded by the Germans and *Oberwachtmeister* Wunderlich (who as far as I know came from Leipzig) took them all into the ghetto, from where they were supposed to be transported somewhere else.



I speak a little German, and due to my work I was able to move around the *Sejm*. This is how I often managed to eavesdrop on what the Germans said to one another.

Round-ups in the city were carried out by this very battalion. I sometimes managed to hear where round-ups were planned and then I tried to warn a given area by telephone in person. We used a code to communicate with my friends in the city.

According to my calculations, during the period from November 1939 until 1943 around one thousand Poles in total were shot in the *Sejm* grounds. Not all execution victims were buried onsite. Most of the corpses were taken somewhere else.

I don't know where they were taken.

There were no executions in the *Sejm* from the end of 1943 up to July 1944. In July, three men were brought from Praga. They had been tortured by the Germans, I saw that their faces were bloody and bruised. They were forced to lie on their backs and one of the Germans, an officer, approached them... (it was an officer from the First Company of the 17th SS battalion, I don't know his name). He approached them and shot them with a revolver in the heart. I saw that from behind a fence. This took place during the daytime, at 7 in the morning. The Germans said these had been partisans. Two of them were younger, perhaps 21 to 25 years old, one was around 40 years old. These men were handcuffed. They were not blindfolded.

The 301st SS Battalion was replaced by the 6th SS Battalion, who remained in the *Sejm* quarters for three months, and then were replaced by the 17th SS Battalion, who remained there until the end, that is until the uprising.

I saw that when people were being herded to be executed they were beaten and shoved with rifle butts. I don't remember the names of the Poles who were arrested and subsequently executed. During that time I tried to learn their names and write them down, I also collected the documents they dropped. Unfortunately, after I had run away from the *Sejm* before the uprising, the Germans destroyed my flat in my absence. On 1 August at 3 p.m. I went to the post assigned to me, since I was taking part in the uprising. I left a tank filled with petrol in the boiler room and I told my wife that she should set the petrol on fire when our troops attacked. I hoped that this would disrupt the Germans and make it possible for our troops to capture the *Sejm*.



As I later found out, my wife had not managed to do this. The Germans figured out early that I had run away and they surrounded my flat. I know from other Polish *Sejm* workers that after I had escaped the Germans searched my flat. It contained Polish banners sewn by us, I also had a radio at home, since I listened to the radio throughout the German occupation.

People told me that the Germans then arrested my wife Rozalia. They kept her under arrest until 15 August 1944. *Sejm* stoker Wojtczak told me that he had seen my wife being executed in the *Sejm* garden. She was killed by *Oberwachtmeister* Matias (he was a *Volksdeutsch* from the Pomerania region) with a shot in the back of the head. They buried her within the *Sejm* grounds. Having returned from German captivity, where I found myself after the uprising, I exhumed my wife's body. I recognized my wife's body and I buried her.

Wojtczak and others told me that after my wife's arrest a man called Kleczkowski (I don't know his first name), who worked during the German occupation (he lived at Łochowska Street 58 in Warsaw, in Praga), had gone to my flat with the Germans and together with the Germans had taken various items from it.

I should add that based on my own observations, and on what was told to me by the Jews who buried the execution victims (I made contact with them), I know that after the execution the [wounded] victims were not killed off, so that some of them were buried while still alive.

I should add that to date I have met none of the Jews who worked as the last group and lived in the *Sejm* (as I have mentioned above) for four uninterrupted months. I knew their faces well. They came from various classes, both working class and intelligentsia. I don't remember their names. I only know that one of them, Jurek Rozenberg, ran away from the ghetto to a hotel in Długa Street, from where Jews were to be deported to Argentina or Brazil.

I know this since he wrote me a note from this hotel, asking to bring him some food for the way. I got him this food, and he promised that he would let me know if he made it to America. I have never heard from him since. When I went into that hotel, there could have been around two thousand Jews in there.



What happened to them, I do not know.

I remembered that in winter 1940 I saw that, among others, a nun was executed in the *Sejm* garden.

She wore a monastic habit. Due to the hood she had on her head, it was impossible to tell whether she was old or young.

I saw that a few groups were herded for execution in the winter of 1940, in frosty weather, barefoot. None of them wore an overcoat.

Starting from the end of 1943, the people brought to the *Sejm* buildings were not detained there for long; right away, the same watch or the next took them to the Gestapo in aleja Szucha. The items that the arrestees brought with them to the *Sejm* remained there. I believe that eight rooms on the first floor were filled with these items. SS battalion officers and soldiers distributed them among themselves.

I took part in the uprising and I was wounded in my head, neck, and side. I had five wounds in total. I was taken captive in Solec Street on 7 October 1944. I was transported to the Gestapo in aleja Szucha, where I was beaten up, then I was transported to the catacombs of Saint Stanislaus Church in Wola, where I spent sixty hours getting no help at all; I was interrogated, but I told them nothing.

Since I was captured with men from the Berling troop, I was suspected of being a member of the Soviet army. From the church, although I had a fever of 40 degrees Celsius, I was herded half-naked to Szymanowo, where a camp for Soviet prisoners of war was located. I spent three more days there, and then I was taken to the hospital in Sochaczew. Only there were my wounds dressed for the first time; I already had worms [larvae] in them. In that hospital two Polish women, Bombrych and Wiśniewska, took care of me and brought food for me and my mates. From that hospital I was transported to Łódź, from where five days later I was transported to Inowrocław; at that point I was robbed of the remainder of my money and a golden watch. They were stolen by SS-men. I spent five days in Inowrocław.

I had my wounds redressed in those hospitals, but I was treated like a dog. I had no underwear, I lay naked [wrapped] in a blanket.



From there I was transported to a camp for prisoners of war in Zeithem, where I was placed in the camp hospital. I underwent surgery there, but only after the camp had been taken over by the Russians (in May 1945).

I wish to note that during the Warsaw Uprising, if Germans caught wounded insurgents, they would finish them off, throwing grenades at them, I saw this with my own eyes.

The report was read out.

I wish to add that I know from conversations overheard between the Germans that the executions in the streets of Warsaw were carried out precisely by men from the 17th SS Battalion.

The report was read out.