



## ANONYMOUS AUTHOR

The first mass execution took place in Firlej on 4 April 1940. At 5.00 a.m. a detachment of soldiers with spades arrived at the sands and started digging deep pits behind the hillock. At around 11.00 a.m. some of the soldiers left in the direction of Radom, while at around 12.00 p.m. guard posts were set up in Firlej, near the road and those houses that were then inhabited. The children, having finished classes at 1.00 p.m., were forced to remain in the school building. Black vehicles drove there and back. Near the hillock, upon which today there stands an enormous white cross, you could see a swarm of dark figures. Some proceeded deeper into the sands, but the black trucks soon filled the void that they left. Only at dusk did things quieten down. There remained five enormous, yellowish graves, a mass of bloodied lumps of earth, small bone fragments, etc. According to my son, 144 people of both sexes and various ages had been executed. From this moment on, hardly a week passed without two or three similar killings being carried out.

Initially, the Germans dug the pits themselves, either on the day preceding an execution or in the morning. Usually, the victims were accompanied by a detachment of 20 – 30 soldiers armed with rifles, and were led out of the trucks in groups of twelve – fifteen, with their hands tied behind their backs. Some 200 – 300 meters before the freshly dug hollows, they would have white blindfolds put over their eyes. They walked one behind the other, spaced out, and each was accompanied by two Germans. Next, they were stood on the edge of the pit. A rifle salvo would then be fired, and thereafter we could hear individual revolver shots. We estimated the number of victims by the number of these single shots. Sentries were set up at a certain distance, and they did not allow anyone to come near. Over time, the system changed. The victims would first be unloaded from the trucks and murdered with a shot to the nape of the neck, and only then would the Germans start digging the holes. They tried to erase all traces of the pools of blood that could have been used to calculate the number of those killed.

Later, however, this system too was modified. A black vehicle would stop along the road to Firlej. The Germans then dug holes and threw five or six victims – alive – into each. Next, you would hear a few revolver shots or a machine gun burst, and then individual shots once again. These executions left no traces of blood, only a freshly covered grave and a pile of cartridge cases.



July 1940. The holes had been dug the previous evening. It was just getting dark when the engines of the black trucks sounded. At first, I was unable to determine whether I was seeing people or tree branches. But they were people, Germans, and they had come to see if the pits had not been covered up. After some time, they brought along a withered old woman. She wore a brightly pink jacket, a short, dark skirt – strongly creased – and a white headscarf tied under her chin. One of the Germans had given her his arm. Behind her, there walked a tall woman in a long dress, blindfolded, with a light-colored coat draped over her arm; she was also led by a soldier. We heard some cries, but these did not come from the victims. The soldier who was helping the old woman stopped, thus allowing his colleague to go first. Evidently, he wanted the tall lady to be killed first.

Next came three or four groups of men, numbering 10 – 12 each. When the women were carrying milk in the morning, they saw three enormous, fresh graves and tire tracks in the sand.

Autumn. Thursday. A cold, snowy wind blew across the frozen earth. The time was 12.30 p.m. A black vehicle passed the school and stopped at a distance of 400 – 500 meters. A large group of Germans got off and tried to dig, but the ground was frozen solid. Nearby, they found a large hollow, from which even that morning some Jews had been collecting sand to take to Radom. The Germans deepened it a bit and then led out their victims, four or five of whom walked very slowly and with considerable difficulty. One of them stopped by the open pit and resisted being pushed in. Only a strong kick from behind caused the man to stagger and slide down into the hollow. Shots were then fired from a number (eight – ten) of revolvers. And again, and yet again. Dusk fell rapidly. The vehicle left, but a few soldiers remained. I could no longer stand and watch, for I was accompanied by my children, who lived in Krzewień at the time, and so we walked towards the river, leaving the Germans very much to my left. One of them detached himself from the group, however, and walked up very close to where we were hiding. The children, cowering with terror, nestled up to me so as to take up as little space as possible. We passed by the dangerous spot without a word.

1941. A foggy March morning, 7.30 a.m. A group of children, hurrying to school, ascended the hillock from the side of Krzewień. Opposite them, a long line of prisoners walked up the same hillock, escorted by the Hitlerite heroes. Seeing the children, the soldiers ran towards them with their rifles raised, ready to shoot. The kids, terrified, ran helter-skelter down the



hillock and tore off straight ahead, stopping only at my fence. And the long double line of prisoners proceeded slowly on its final journey. By then, they had no blindfolds. There were many women among them, delicate and frail.

1943. The eviction. [The Germans] drove up a few times in September and in the beginning of October, closely inspecting the hilly area and our homes. Always, the last place that they would visit would be their very own execution sites. Finally, on 10 October we were officially informed that we were to leave our homes in three days, taking all our belongings with us. Our neighbors were similarly instructed. For the time being, the residents of Wincentów were let alone. But three and a half days later, they too were expelled from their homesteads. The Germans had put up warning signs in the sands and set up guard posts all over the place, while in the night a gigantic floodlight swept a wide radius of the area.

They brought in posts, enormous sheets of metal, and large quantities of bricks. Looking through binoculars, you could see the figures of men digging. A few days later, a large column of smoke billowed into the sky, while at night a gigantic glow could be seen. We saw figures carrying sheaves of straw, or maybe bundles of wicker. A dozen or so days later, the fire was moved, and burned at its new location for six months.

When in April 1944 we returned to our settlements, we started looking for traces. All had been carefully erased, however, but the dirt road – compacted by truck tires – gave us a vital clue: the ashes had been dumped in the river. Near the bank you could find teeth and charred fragments of bone. The earth under the crematorium had been carefully sifted, although traces of the furnaces were visible here and there. In a barn, we found a man's coat and a cap, while elsewhere somebody stumbled upon a skirt. Finally, a brooch was discovered in some room.

After a few weeks, when strong winds had blown away the sand from where the crematorium had stood, we saw a great number of buttons, buckles and beads; you could even find teeth in metal crowns. And when the sun shone for a while, here and there large stains of some oily liquid – petroleum perhaps – came to the surface of the earth.

Finally, we thought that no more people would be murdered here; but we were wrong. It turned out that yet another execution was carried out on the very day when we returned to our homes. As before, fresh graves continued to spring up – of 20 men from the LHWD, of



44 "bandits", as the Germans called them, of a man who had fallen from a roof in Radom after being shot, and of a great many others.

By now, however, the Germans avoided mass graves, placing the bodies in smaller holes. The graves of individual victims were often so shallow that they would be easily uncovered by dogs. The final execution took place on Saturday, 13 January 1945.