



ALEKSANDER KISIEL

Warsaw, 31 May 1946. Deputy Prosecutor Zofia Rudziewicz interviewed the person specified below as a witness. Having been advised of the criminal liability for making false declarations, the witness testified as follows:

Name and surname	Aleksander Kisiel
Date of birth	31 December 1913
Names of parents	Aleksander and Matylda
Occupation	priest-monk (choir monk) of the order of the Society of Jesus
Religious affiliation	Roman Catholic
Criminal record	none
Education	Faculty of Humanities of the University of Warsaw

When the Germans entered Warsaw in October 1939 I was a monk in the order of the Society of Jesus in Warsaw. Right after they had entered, the Germans arrested many priests in Warsaw, among them around twenty priests from my order. They were released two weeks later.

After civil administrative authorities had been established in the General Government [Generalne Gubernatorstwo], Germans began to persecute the Catholic Church. Regulations for the entire Church within the territory of the Warsaw district were issued. We received these regulations through the metropolitan curia, which invoked the regulations of the district authorities. The regulations were as follows:

1. Limitations on freedom of religious cult, consisting in: prohibitions against organizing processions, using bells, singing certain religious songs, saying certain prayers and giving



sermons. These regulations were in violation not only of the rules of the church but also of the concordat, which clearly guaranteed freedom of religious practices.

2. Limitations in the scope of dispensing sacraments due to national affiliation. Polish priests could not dispense sacraments either to Germans and *Volksdeutschen*, or to Jews. This was in violation of the freedom of conscience, guaranteed by the Constitution; it was also in breach of the rules of the common Catholic Church.
3. Prohibition against admitting new members to religious congregations. We were informed thereof by the metropolitan curia. This was in violation of the concordat, which guaranteed the freedom of association.
4. Prohibition against organized academic education. Despite this prohibition, our order provided clandestine philosophical and theological studies in Warsaw.

Apart from these regulations of a general nature, our congregation received also an order of confiscation of all printing and bookbinding devices. We received this order directly from the district in 1940. The printing house and the bookbinding house were sealed off then. In 1942 all devices and machines were taken away. This was carried out by the district officials. These regulations were in violation of the concordat, since confiscation of this property limited the freedom of pursuing religious press activity. I need to add that the Germans issued a general prohibition against publishing religious writings.

In Warsaw our order did not lose many men. I got the impression that through their political actions, the Germans wanted to create the appearance of a certain religious freedom, which in fact did not exist, since we lived in an atmosphere of constant terror. We only had one search; as far as I remember it was carried out by the Gestapo in 1942, I believe. They were then looking for one of the priests, whom they did not find, since he was in hiding. It was unclear what he had been accused of.

During the uprising, on 2 August 1944, I was in the religious house at Rakowiecka Street 61. This house was outside of the area of insurgent activity. We could hear distant shooting, but there were no insurgents and no barricades in the vicinity. On 2 August 1944, fifteen SS-men entered our house at 10 a.m. They accused us of shooting at them from the windows, which was not true. They carried out a search, but it was unsuccessful (since they were looking for weapons). They ordered everyone to go to the basement. I wish to note that apart from friars,



there were civilians in the house – several men, a few women and a ten-year-old boy, who sought shelter with us after the outbreak of the uprising.

In the basement, the SS-men took away watches from all of us, and then ordered us to go into a small room. There were around fifty of us in a room that was two and a half meters wide and five meters long. The SS-men set machine guns in front of the door of this room, whereupon two of them started throwing hand grenades at the people crowded in the room, and then they fired the machine gun. Everyone collapsed to the ground. The SS-man went away for a while. Two civilians ran out of the room; they were trying to escape, but they got killed. One of the SS-men came running again and he fired the automatic gun twice at the wounded and dying people lying on the floor. I was barely grazed, I lay on the ground among the corpses, pretending to be dead. One of the SS-men, hearing moans, burst into the room and started killing whoever was still alive with a handgun. He was walking on the corpses, he stood with his feet on my back and noticing I was still alive, he shouted: "*Der ist noch zu f[...]*". He fired the handgun aiming for my head but missed. The bullet grazed my ear, I got covered in blood, and the German ceased aiming at me without checking whether I was alive. After that SS-man left, two others came and again they were killing the wounded. I was lucky, since, checking the persons lying on the bed, one SS-man tossed a pillow away and it covered me. I heard such remarks as: "*Der lebt noch, der [...] [...]*", which were followed by gunshots. Leaving, they threw grenades and left.

When the SS-men left the house, it turned out that fourteen people had survived the massacre. We all hid in the coal room (in the same building). Twenty minutes later the SS-men came back, they doused the bodies of the dead with petrol and set them on fire. The bodies were partially burnt, but the fire did not spread. On the following day the SS-men set almost the entire house on fire, but thanks to its iron-concrete construction it did not burn down completely. Fourteen out of the forty rooms survived, and what is most important, the walls did not crumble.

All that time the fourteen survivors stayed in the basement, hearing the Germans plundering and burning. Only on 5 August 1944, making use of the temporary absence of Germans, and the assistance provided to us by a Polish sanitary point, did we take shelter in the nearby blocks of flats.

I heard people living in the vicinity of our house saying that one of the SS-men, when asked what had happened to the priests, allegedly said: "*Ich werde jeden Priester [...] [...]*" This entire operation seemed to be aimed solely at the extermination of civilians, since there could have been no military motives here.