



## ADAM LEWAK

On 3 June 1946 in Warsaw, Deputy Prosecutor of the Special Criminal Court, Prosecutor's Office, Branch No. 2 in Warsaw, Zofia Rudziewicz interviewed the person named below as a witness. Having been advised of the criminal liability for making false declarations and of the content of Art. 106 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, the witness testified as follows:

---

<b>Name and surname</b>	Adam Lewak
<b>Date of birth</b>	3 September 1891
<b>Names of parents</b>	Józef and Ludwika
<b>Place of residence</b>	Warsaw, Krakowskie Przedmieście Street 26
<b>Place of birth</b>	Pniaki, Brody County, Tarnopol province
<b>Religious affiliation</b>	Roman Catholic
<b>Occupation</b>	director of the University Library
<b>Education</b>	Faculty of Philosophy, Jagiellonian University
<b>Criminal record</b>	none

---

When the Germans entered Warsaw I was director of the University Library and I remained in that post throughout the occupation. Upon the capture of Warsaw, the security police, the SD, took up positions in the university buildings. In connection with setting up the Hitlerite-religious union Julfeier, they burned down the Auditorium Maximum on 20 December 1939. The police set up stables in the charred building, using stylish reading tables for horse boxes. Cells for political prisoners were created in the safe shelters under the Auditorium Maximum, where prisoners being interrogated, particularly Jews, were tortured. The police seized the entire library building, allowing me and four others to transfer the books to storage. The police only left the library building in June 1941. In November and December 1939, two Germans,



Mühlmann and Kraus, removed from the library some of the most precious manuscripts and over a dozen sketches and drawings from [King] Stanisław August Poniatowski's collection. They were acting upon the orders of the General Government authorities. In January 1940, pursuant to Fischer's order, we had to deliver to the district "twelve running meters of books" that were beautifully bound, which we did by relinquishing three thousand nicely bound volumes, trying to select the least valuable items. On 1 July 1941, Doctor Wilhelm Witte was appointed commissioner for Warsaw libraries on behalf of the Germans. He reported to the district. This entailed the systematic demolition of libraries. In 1941 and 1942, Witte ordered that Polish books be transferred from the University Library to the National Library (Rakowiecka Street), and foreign-language ones from the National Library to the University Library. The purpose was to gather all the Polish works at the National Library and to make it impossible for anyone to use them. Book collections for the use of the German authorities and Volksdeutsche were to be located at the University Library. Only those with written confirmation from a German employer stating that they needed to use the library for the purposes of the German authorities were allowed to use the books. At that time, around 100,000 volumes of Polish periodicals were transferred from our library to the National Library and over 200,000 books were transferred from the National Library to our library. Following my intervention in Krakow, this operation was discontinued. Witte suspended me from my position, however I was reinstated a month later.

In 1941, Tzschaschel and Witte demanded the liquidation of the Krasieński Library. At the same time, Edward Krasieński, the owner and head of that library, was arrested and sent to Dachau, where he was killed. At a conference in Brühl Palace, attended by the Germans, myself, Dr. Grycz, and members of the Krasieński family, I also made the objection that the destruction of the Krasieński Library was in breach of the provisions of the Hague Convention, to which Witte replied that the Germans would take care of the liability. Fischer did not attend the meeting, but Tzschaschel and Witte were there on his behalf.

New Polish books from the Krasieński Library were moved to the National Library, new foreign language books were moved to the University Library, and despite our protests, incunabula (prints dating earlier than 1500), manuscripts, engravings, drawings, maps, atlases and musical scores from all the Warsaw libraries were taken there as well. They were placed in damp storage rooms that had been damaged in the course of military operations. Dr. Grycz went to intervene in Krakow because of this, but it did not help, since Witte had the support



of the Warsaw district authorities. I am convinced that the Germans wanted to gather the most valuable works at the Krasieński Library to facilitate their later removal to Germany, citing the fact that the Krasieński estate was located in territories annexed to the Reich. I discovered that, being a man of little character, Dr. Witte was only acting on the inspiration and instruction of the district authorities. The world-famous Załuski Collection, the Rapperswil Collection, the Batignolles Collection, the Krasieński collections and the collections of the Music Conservatory were brought to the Krasieński Library, altogether around 60,000 manuscripts, 200,000 old books, several thousand musical scores (including Chopin's manuscripts), tens of thousands of maps and atlases, over 100,000 engravings and drawings, all of them priceless, irreplaceable, not only in terms of Polish culture, but on a world scale. This is evidenced by the numerous multi-volume catalogues of these manuscripts. A small fraction of these items was removed by an SS officer to Germany in 19[.], from where only fragments came back, the rest was burned in October 1944 by the Brandkommando. I believe that in order to burn them, the Germans had to pour a flammable substance over these papers, since dusty old prints do not easily catch fire and are hard to burn.

During the Uprising, three librarians and one person working in the storage were present in the University Library. The Germans ordered them to bury the dead and transport food to German soldiers posted to dangerous positions. Dr. Krampera, who was a librarian, was killed when performing these tasks. The others were thrown out of Warsaw in September 1944. SS-men evacuated around 100 boxes of old prints from the library, and the rest was to be burnt. I know this from Korzeniowski and Marcin Toporowski, who were still in the library (both were librarians).

On the basis of the surrender agreement, the Germans should have let us evacuate any cultural items. I contacted Director Lorentz and both of us took part in the evacuation of library collections from Warsaw to Pruszków. This is how the University Library, the National Library, and the library of the Warsaw School of Economics were saved. Yet after the surrender, the Germans burnt down the Public Library (300,000 volumes), the library of the Medical Association (around 100,000 volumes), and all the private bookstores and libraries. In my estimation, the losses suffered as a result of the burning of books in private bookstores and scholarly societies after the surrender might amount to between ten and twenty million [zlotys].



I am [here] referring to my article in the journal *Science and Art*, entitled "Warsaw Libraries during the Occupation of 1939-1944", of which I shall forward a typescript.

I should add that in March 1940, I was arrested by the Gestapo and imprisoned in Mokotów and Pawiak prisons. I was released after three weeks, without having been interrogated.

Prisoners were mistreated all the time. We were starved, we were not allowed to take walks in the courtyard or to receive any packages, eighteen people were kept in three-person cells, both political and criminal prisoners were beaten during transportation from Mokotów to Pawiak prison.