



WŁADYSŁAW ANDUŁA and 34 eyewitnesses

Firlej, 28 April 1945

The Hitlerite terror

Firlej – a factory settlement located near the Warsaw highway, five kilometers from Radom. For five and a half years, the residents of this hamlet were eyewitnesses to executions of Polish citizens. East of Firlej (half a kilometer) there are some wastelands – a sandy area, free of trees and slightly undulating – that the Nazi scoundrels chose as the execution site.

One morning in March 1940, people observed successive columns of trucks returning from the location. Initially, none of us assumed that executions were being held there. On 4 April 1940 (a Thursday) at around 1.00 – 2.00 p.m. the trucks left the highway and turned towards Firlej. At first, people assumed that the Germans intended to station troops here. But a bunch of Gestapo men jumped out and started herding the residents of Firlej into their homes. Nobody was allowed to go out, and sentries were set up at each house. Those who could, started peering through slits in their roofs or window curtains. We did not yet believe what was going on. The trucks had brought people to be executed. They were waiting their turn in groups of 10 – 15. They had their hands tied behind their backs, and were tied up in twos or threes, one to each other. The execution lasted until 6.00 p.m. For us, this was a day of great drama. After the barbarians had left, the residents finally walked out of their homes, crying.

4 April 1940 was the day on which the regular executions commenced. And they were so numerous and so frequent that we lost our ability to work – physically or mentally. Not a week passed without three or four shootings being held. Initially, the Gestapo would arrive the day before an execution in order to dig pits. These were 10 meters long, 2 meters wide, and a meter and a half deep. There were tens of these hollows. Larger killings took place further away, and we were unable to observe them. You could only hear bursts of fire followed by individual shots.

In winter, the trucks did not go far off the road due to the snowbanks. They would stop right next to our buildings, and the people would be driven on foot to the execution site. In the majority of instances, the victims were deprived of their clothes and underwear.

This butchery, so frequent and cruel, lasted until 9 October 1943. The next day some Gestapo men drove up to Firlej and, after inspecting the area where the shootings were carried out, ordered the local civilians to leave their places of residence within 48 hours, taking their entire livestock and movables with them. A commotion broke out amongst the frightened and desperate residents. Two days later, the village of Wincentów received the very same order.

On 12 October 1943, the German gendarmerie arrived and took over the entire school building. The area started to bustle with activity. Trucks plied the road between Radom and Firlej day and night, bringing the necessary materials to the execution site. After a few days, sentry posts were set up, while the location of the shootings was screened from the west (the Warsaw highway) with tall mats.

In the first days of November 1943, a bluish smoke appeared in the sky. The Germans had started burning the bodies! The smoke did not rise high above the ground, bringing with it a terrible stench. The incinerations went on day and night, and came to an end only in the beginning of March 1944. During this period of just under six months, the Germans continued to bring in bodies using specially adapted (covered) trucks, while a few shootings would also be conducted every day. The crimes were committed even at night, with the location lit up by headlamps.

So – how many people could they have murdered in this period alone? And previously? And later? Even if we state that this number exceeded 12,000 – 15,000 people, we could still be guilty of making an underestimate.

We lost all hope for tomorrow, thinking that after the Germans had finished off all these people, they would turn their attention to us. Our experience was terrible, nearly impossible to write down in words. You would need a writer to give an able portrayal of what went on here. Lo and behold – this hideous crime was being perpetrated by “propagators of Western culture”!

Towards the end of March, the German criminals left Firlej for the vicinity of Skarżysko[-Kamienna], where they continued their “work”.

The residents moved back into their cottages and homes. We thought that this crime would not be repeated in Firlej. But only a week after our return, we saw trucks drive up, and thereafter heard bursts of fire followed by individual shots. The killings had begun afresh!

In July 1944, when things began to get somewhat hot for the Hitlerite murderers (the Red Army was nearing the Vistula), the executions intensified. People were killed daily. On 6 July 1944, a few trucks drove up. The executions were carried out. Then the German gendarmes took the residents of Firlej and nearby villages and forced them to bury the bodies. The corpses would be carted off in various directions, so as to cover up all traces of the crime. This continued without a pause until 12 January 1945. Only the victorious Red Army, which entered our area of Poland on 16 January, put an end to these terrible crimes.

Signatures of the eyewitnesses:

[illegible], Adam Lipiński, Janina Żurek, Zbigniew Luty, Tadeusz Wojdat, Bogusław Ryczkowski, Leon Krzyszkowski, Antoni Czarnecki, Maria Pochyła, M. Stańczykowski, Władysław Anduła, [illegible], Stefan Komar, Stanisław Fotek, Zygmunt Ziomnicki, Antoni Przyja, Stefan Garbalski, Mieczysław Pochyła, Bieńkowski, Władysław Dryja, Edward Żyła, Janina Majchrzak, Jan Krzyżanowski, Józef Zdrzalik, Józef Muc, Wł. Blinstrub, Antoni Dryja, Janina Budzik, Stefan Polak, Aleksander Bakalarz, Aniela Blinstrubowa, Józef Rdzanek, Władysław Dryja, Stefan Senator.