



## JAN TOKAJ

On 27 February 1948, upon a summons issued by the District Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes, citizen Jan Tokaj, resident in Piotrków, Reymonta Street 25, employed at the Polish Theatre, presented himself. He gave the following testimony to the clerk of the District Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Warsaw, Andrzej Janowski:

When the Warsaw Uprising broke out, I was in my company apartment at Senatorska Street 21/23, situated on the premises of the Grand Theatre.

Late in evening of 7 August 1944 I was on the roof of the 4-storey pattern-shop, where I wanted to feed the pigeons. I observed that German detachments (I could not determine the unit) were attacking from the petrol depot located at the exit of Focha Street in the direction of the even-numbered addresses on Focha Street; I also noticed that something was burning in Focha Street, near Trębacka, and I got the impression that it was a shop display. Shortly thereafter – around 21.00 – I saw German detachments moving towards the Brühl Palace, and they occupied Lourse's cake shop on the corner of Trębacka and Wierzbowa Streets.

At that point I went down to the shelter beneath the main opera building, where a very large group of civilians had already gathered (when war broke out in 1939, as many as 3 thousand people had sought refuge there), and notified my family that I intended to hide. I first hid above the library of the National Theatre together with Jan Binkowski (resident at Chabrowa Street 14, currently in the army). This is where we spent the night from 7 to 8 August.

In the morning I decided to return to the public shelter where my wife was staying. While going to the shelter, I noticed a German soldier in an SS uniform who was speaking in Ukrainian. When on 8 August in the morning I sneaked by the house of the opera, I noticed that a German soldier was standing there and shouting towards the stage: "Ausweis"; then he fired a burst from his machine gun and threw a grenade. The corpses of some six men were lying in the house, and they had bare feet. Therefore, I decided to return to hiding. I returned to the National Theatre and hid in the ruins left from 1939, staying there until the evening of that day. Before evening, when the visibility was still good, I crept up to



the premises of the opera. Passing by the house, I saw a very large pile of male bodies; as a rough estimate, I would say there were 150 corpses. I then went under the chimney of the opera's central heating system, and hid mainly there. The following accompanied me: Jan Binkowski, Romczyk (residing in Kraków), the Szczerbakowskis – Jan and his brother Wacław, Władysław Charaszkiewicz (residing in Warsaw), and others – ten people in total. When I left my hiding place to get some food, more or less three days later, that is, on the 11 or 12 of August, I passed near the house of the opera and saw that the bodies were burning. I got the impression that there were even more bodies than when I saw them for the first time, that is, on 8 August. No one was attending the burning bodies, although I could hear someone speaking in German at a certain distance.