



RUDOLF HERMAN

Warsaw, 13 March 1948. Judge Halina Wereńko, a member of the District Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Warsaw, interviewed the person named below as a witness, without taking an oath. Having been advised of the criminal liability for making false declarations, the witness testified as follows:

Name and surname	Rudolf Herman
Parents' names	Gustaw and Karolina, <i>née</i> Kocórek
Date of birth	20 December 1894, Prusinów (Belarus)
Religion	Roman Catholic
Place of residence	Warsaw, Szaserów Street 17, flat 5
Citizenship and nationality	Polish
Profession	office worker at the municipal board

When the Warsaw Uprising broke out, I was at Senatorska Street 19 in Warsaw. In the first days of the uprising, the insurrectionists took over the town hall. German attacks were conducted from Wierzbowa Street and the Brühl Palace, through the opera, in the direction of Senatorska and Miodowa Streets. During the night from 7 to 8 August, fighting was underway in our area. The insurrectionists withdrew from our house, and I, together with other residents, went to the cellars of the house at Senatorska Street 17. At 4.00 or 5.00 a detachment of several dozen SS men ran into the courtyard of the house (I recognised the unit by their black uniform lapels); they spoke only in German, threw the people out of the cellars – stealing their jewellery – and led us to the gate of house number 19. We numbered some 200 – 300 people, including more or less one hundred men. The group's commander, an SS *Untersturmführer*, issued an order and his soldiers shot a young tenant of our house, I don't know his surname, who after leaving the cellar went first to



his apartment and only then proceeded to the courtyard. The SS men ordered us to take down a barricade erected at the point where Senatorska Street enters Theatre Square, and then knocked out a hole in the building at Senatorska Street 19 from the side of Focha Street, and through this opening marched us to the opera, to the entrance from Focha Street. While passing, I determined that the insurrectionists were still firing at the opera. It was around 8.00, and we were being led along corridors to the opera proper. At one of the staircases the SS men separated the group of men from the women and children. The women were then directed to an apartment closer to Theatre Square, while the group of men were marched to the stairs deeper in the building, which led to the upper floors. Even before the women were separated I noticed that groups of men, unknown to myself, were joining our group and ascending the stairs before us. Suddenly, one of the SS men from our escort was hit by a bullet, which entered through the hole from the side of the town hall. The SS men then ordered myself and the caretaker from Senatorska Street 17 (I don't know his surname) to carry the wounded SS man to the ground floor. We were given a stretcher and, covered by the women, carried the man to the Brühl Palace, going through Theatre Square and Wierzbowa Street.

While exiting the opera, I heard short bursts of gunfire. As far as I know, none of the men from our group returned. I assume that they were shot dead on the premises of the opera. Following the liberation, exhumations conducted by the Red Cross led to the finding of identity cards, [among others] that of Szumowski, a resident of the house at Senatorska Street 19, whom I had left on the stairs of the opera just prior to leaving the building with the wounded SS man.

Apart from the SS man who had been wounded in the opera, three or four other stretchers with wounded German soldiers were carried to the Brühl Palace. In all, the stretchers were carried by eight men, under the cover of a few dozen women. Once the wounded had been brought in, we were added to a group of some 50 civilian men and arranged in two lines near Lourse's cake shop, between the end of Trębacka Street and the beginning of Fredry Street. The women were dismissed. We stood there until 17.00, providing cover from insurrectionist fire from Bielańska Street. Behind our backs, the German soldiers crossed Wierzbowa Street and proceeded in the direction of the opera. A group of SS men were standing near Lourse's cake shop, and a few of them were speaking in German with an Austrian accent. Three or four in our group had been wounded in the shooting. The SS men from the group sheltered



behind our backs at Fredry and Trębacka Streets ordered four men from our group to step out and run towards Bielańska Street – ‚home‘, as they said. They shot all four of them while they were running. At around 17.00 I noticed that a group of civilian men, numbering a few hundred, hastily exited Alberta Street; there were many priests among them. The group ran in the direction of Bielańska Street through Theatre Square, and were fired upon by a machine gun. The people fell with their faces towards Bielańska Street. I therefore surmised that could not have been shot at by the insurrectionists. Immediately after this, our group was ordered to run in the direction of Bielańska Street. However, we were forced into Alberta Street, mingling with a group of civilian men, women, and children that numbered approximately one thousand people. Our group was escorted by SS men who spoke in German.

I saw how the SS men took a tall man from our group and led him to a gate; then I heard single shots. I observed two such instances, and one of the SS men hit me and threatened that I would also be taken to the gate and finished off. I did not witness the detainees having their identity papers checked. In the afternoon (around 18.00), our group was led through Alberta Street to the Saski Square, up to Ossolińskich Street, to the courtyard of the Potockich Palace. A large group of civilians, numbering a few thousand, was gathered there. I saw how the women with children and pregnant women were driven off in four or five motor vehicles. In the evening a group of a few hundred people was formed, and I was amongst them. We were taken through the Saski Garden in fours. There we met other groups and stopped on a few occasions. The SS men amused themselves by beating up and harassing the civilians. They threatened that they would shoot us, and indeed shot a few men, amongst them a certain priest, in the bushes. At around 23.00 or 24.00 we were marched off. Near the Karola Boromeusza Church at Chłodna Street, escort duties were taken over by the Gendarmerie, and near the Franaszek factory at Wolska Street, by the Wehrmacht, while at the tollbooth by a unit of Don Cossacks, who led us to the transit camp in Pruszków. I managed to escape along the way.