

## MIECZYŚŁAW GURBIEL

Warsaw, 20 May 1948. Member of the District Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Warsaw, Judge Halina Wereńko, interviewed the person specified below as an unsworn witness. Having been advised of the criminal liability for making false declarations and of the wording of Articles 107 and 115 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, the witness testified as follows:

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Name and surname	Mieczysław Edward Gurbiel
Date of birth	20 [missing] 1920 in Miechów
Names of parents	Wincenty and Maria née Skoruch
Place of residence	[...]
Education	secondary school
Religion	Roman Catholic
State and national affiliation	Polish
Profession	merchant, co-owner of the store in Widok Street 25

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I was in a flat at Graniczna Street 13 in Warsaw when the Warsaw Uprising broke out. The insurgents captured Graniczna Street on 1 August 1944, and during the next couple of days there was no fighting in the vicinity of our house.

On 8 August 1944 at 6 a.m., German gendarmerie troops walked into our street from the direction of Żelaznej Bramy Square. Several gendarmes arrived at our house, ordering all residents to get out. In Graniczna Street, the residents of our house were joined with groups brought from the neighbouring houses and we were herded to Nowa Marszałkowska Street in the Saxon Garden. Men were separated from women, and after that we were robbed. Our

jewellery was taken by the gendarmes who had escorted us and by groups of soldiers from other units, who were joining us. My watch was taken by a Ukrainian.

We were brought to the front of the Mirowskie Market Halls [Hale Mirowskie], the men were kept there and the women were herded in the direction of Wola.

A couple of dozen men, myself among them, were halted, others were also herded in the direction of Wola. We were ordered to take our jackets and shirts off, a group of ten men were counted (myself among them) and put with our hands in the air against the wall of the Hala Mirowska located closer to the Saxon Garden, from the northern side. The other group was cleaning up the road cluttered with bricks, severed wires, kiosks and telephone poles.

Soldiers with a machine gun positioned themselves in front of us. We were waiting to be executed. However, after a while some German officer gave an order to put us to work cleaning the road. We were working near Wielopolski Palace. While we were working, one of the gendarmes, thinking that I was working too slow, hit me in the chest with the butt of his rifle. Another man from our group was shot by the gendarmes. They ordered us to throw the corpse into a burning shop in Zimna Street.

At about 1 p.m. all of us were herded to the fire station in Chłodna Street, near the observation tower. After an hour we were joined with a large group of men and were herded to Wolska Street in front of Saint Adalbert Church. An SD sergeant came out to us – I later found out that his name was Bem – accompanied by two SD-men, and then Bem selected thirty men from our group, me among them. The rest were herded down Wolska Street.

Our group was brought to the churchyard. Through an interpreter, an SD-man or a Gestapo man told us that the Germans would spare our lives, but we would work hard. We were taken to Sokołowska Street and brought to a red building opposite the vicarage, to the third floor. Sergeant Bem took me and several other men to the "Społem" warehouse in Wolska Street, on the corner of Sokołowska Street, and to the marmalade factory in Wolska Street. A Ukrainian took a pack of cigarettes from me, for which Bem hit me, not saying anything to the Ukrainian.

Bem used chalk to write "Verbrennungskommando 30 men" (in German) on the door of the room in which we were put. When I arrived in Sokołowska Street, on the second floor of the building there was already a group of men, allegedly detained the day before. On the

following day there were already two groups of Verbrennungskommando quartered in several rooms. I am unable to say how many men they numbered.

On the following day in the morning we were woken up, and then under escort, dressed only in trousers, we were led to Górczewska Street, at the corner of Zagłoby Street. We were collecting corpses from both sides of the road: on the south side, from a potato field, and on the north side, from a yard. The group was divided into two subgroups. The subgroup I was in collected corpses from a house yard. There were bodies of men, women and children. Some male and female corpses were dressed in white aprons, several corpses were dressed in tram driver uniforms, several were dressed in scout uniforms. The number of corpses was very large. Roughly speaking, there could have been over five hundred of them. We burnt them on a pyre in the same yard where we had found them. We worked for about five hours, after which we were allowed to wash, given two raw eggs each, and brought back to Sokołowska Street.

I don't remember the date, it was on the second or third day of my work in the Verbrennungskommando, we were brought to Wolska Street opposite Saint Adalbert Church. At that time, a single-story brick building stood on the spot where there is a cross now. In the back of the house we found corpses of Jews dressed in cloths made of blue fabric with black stripes and in matching caps. There were about two hundred bodies, they were emaciated and bore marks of beating. Since they all had identical clothes, this could have been a group from a prison or a camp. On the northern side, by the next wall, there were about fifty partially burnt corpses of men and women. Close to them there lay bags of partially burnt flour. We burnt the bodies on the spot.

On 11 August 1944 (I am not sure of the date), I was taken together with my group to Karol and Maria Hospital in Leszno Street. We piled up several corpses of men in the yard under a wall, and we collected single corpses from the entire area. From the main pavilion on the side of Leszno Street we took corpses of men and women, and from pavilion S – bodies of children. In total, we might have collected, roughly speaking, around three hundred corpses from this area.

On the following day we were taken to Leszno Street. We walked in the direction of Kerceli Square, collecting single corpses from the road on the way. At one point I saw that an injured man was running after some wagons driven by nuns. I saw that he had bandages on his back.

One of the SD-men from our escort shot the man. We burnt his body in a yard in Leszno Street, I don't remember the number.

I saw corpses in burning shops on the right side of Kerceli Square. Corpses of people and horses were scattered in the square. We were throwing corpses into burning shops. At Wolska Street 6, in the garden of the PKO [Pocztowa Kasa Oszczędności – Postal Savings Bank] house and on the adjacent plot under a wall of an outbuilding we found corpses of men, women and children, lying in groups. Apart from that, single bodies and small groups of bodies were found in the houses. We burnt around three hundred corpses there.

After we completed this task, a leutnant, who had accidentally come to be in my escort, pulled out a young boy from our group saying that he was a Jew (I don't know his name). Then a Ukrainian who happened to be passing by shot him. We burnt his body on a pyre, I could see that when the pyre was being lit, the boy was still alive.

I don't know that boy's name.

I don't know the date of the day when we were collecting corpses lying individually in Mirowski Square, where the corpses lay in a bomb crater. We burnt around fifty bodies on a pyre in Mirowski Square. In the Mirowskie Market Halls, located close to Solna Street, we collected the corpses of men, women and children from the basements and from the Hall itself. There was a bomb crater in the middle of the Hall, and we saw corpses in there.

I don't remember the date, close to the "Faun" cinema in Chłodna Street 33 we collected around three hundred corpses of men, women and children from a yard. From Chłodna Street we collected corpses that were lying individually. In Chłodna Street we found a wounded old lady on a stretcher. An SD-man from the escort told us to bring the stretcher to the yard in Chłodna Street 33, where he shot the old lady, and we burnt her body on a pyre with others. In total we burnt around three hundred corpses.

I don't remember the date, in Chłodna Street, on the corner of Okopowa Street, from a garden in a middle of the yard we collected several corpses of men, women and children. We burnt them on the spot.

I don't remember the date, but during the period when groups of residents from the Old Town were being brought to Saint Adalbert Church, I saw the SD escort of a Verbrennungskommando

group shoot two wounded women and a wounded man opposite Saint Adalbert Church, where earlier we had burnt the corpses of the Jews. One of those women left her wounded eight-year-old daughter in Saint Adalbert's Church.

My colleagues told me that other groups burnt corpses in the Old Town, in the Franaszek and "Ursus" plants in Wolska Street, in Saint Lazarus Church in Leszno Street, in Teatralny Square and in other locations.

Apart from burning corpses, I was put to work with a group of around thirty men demolishing a barricade in Ciepła and Krochmalna Streets, from the side of Okopowa Street. I was put to work burning corpses and demolishing barricades for close to ten days.

Around 20 August 1944 (I don't remember the exact date) I was taken to a clean room in the vicarage. I was serving three Germans, cleaning the rooms on the ground floor. One time, while I was cleaning the trousers of one of the Germans in the first room, a medal of the Geheime Staatspolizei fell out of his trouser pocket. I realised that the three Germans I was serving belonged to the Gestapo. During that time Spilke, a high-ranking Gestapo officer, was staying at the vicarage. He organized debriefings every day.

From the moment I was put to work in the vicarage, I could see groups of men and women, often with Home Army [Armia Krajowa – AK] armbands, being brought to the first floor for interrogation. The examinations took place in several rooms. After such an examination, in room 13, I would find almost every time traces of blood and broken furniture. It was also from that room that I could often hear screams and moans from the victims.

I don't remember the date. While I was cleaning a room next door, I saw through the half-open door to room 13 a man lying on the ground on his belly, whom the examiner was hitting on the back with an iron bar.

I don't remember the date – I was already working burning corpses – I saw from a window on the third floor of the house on Sokołowska Street how two men were brought in a car, one of whom was lying on a stretcher. They were taken to the vicarage, and after a while the body of the man whom I earlier saw wounded was carried away on the stretcher.

I don't remember the date. I saw from the window how three Jewesses were brought to the vicarage. During the examination they were stripped of their clothes and beaten.

The interrogated persons were kept under arrest in Sokołowska Street, on the first floor of the house where the Verbrennungskommando was quartered. The detainees were not kept there long. After interrogation they were taken in a car in an unknown direction. My colleagues and I assumed that they were taken away to be executed. The car in which they were transported always came back empty after a short while.

I don't remember the date. A group of Jews in plain clothes and with bundles were brought to the vicarage. After a few hours they were transported away in trucks; they had to leave their belonging behind. At the end of September I managed to escape.

At that the report was concluded and read out.