



HENRYK ZALESKI

Wrocław, 20 January 1948. Judge Jerzy Majewski from the District Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Poland heard as a witness the person specified below; the witness did not swear an oath. Having been advised of the criminal liability for making false declarations, the witness testified as follows:

Name and surname	Henryk Zaleski
Age and place of birth	39 years old, Ołdaki, Ostrołęka county
Names of parents	Michał and Emilia
Place of residence	Wrocław-Leśnica, parish house
Occupation	Roman Catholic priest, rector of a school
Nationality	Polish
Criminal record	a) criminal – none, b) political – none

From September 1943 until the end of the Warsaw Uprising, I was a director of a care home for orphaned boys, victims of the last war, which was situated at Okopowa Street 59 in the factory buildings. The home was funded by the Central Welfare Council. I had a flat there and I stayed there all the time. On 15 July 1944 I took all the boys from the home for summer vacation to Świder. The administrative staff, comprising six people, stayed in the home. On 28 July I came back to Warsaw at the demand of the Home Army authorities. I was assigned as a chaplain to the 28th district in the Okęcie-Koło area. At the outbreak of the uprising I was at Okopowa Street 59. Then I reported to the *Zośka* and *Czata* assault battalions of scouts which were stationed in the building of the elementary school at Okopowa Street 57 and on Gibalskiego Street.

Until 12 August I remained on duty in the above-mentioned battalions. On that day, the *Zośka* and *Czata* battalions, under pressure from the advancing Germans, retreated through



the Ghetto in the direction of the Old Town, and I stayed on the premises of the home at Okopowa Street 59 along with three other people, that is: Jan Woch, Wiesław Kalinowski and Wanda Pietryga (I don't know their addresses). As we did not manage to retreat before the Germans, we hid in a cell between the boiler house and the chimney and we stayed there for three days. In the evening of the third day, I went out with two companions to the factory yard in order to get some food and, having taken part of the stocks from the factory warehouse, we came back to the cell. As we heard the Germans roaming all over the premises, we did not leave our hiding place until the evening of 25 August.

In the morning of 25 August, as we were in the dungeon, we heard distinctly that wheelbarrows were moving across the courtyard. We suspected that the Germans were doing something with the timber that was stored in that area. About half an hour [later] we heard the footsteps of people who were being driven into the factory premises and the voices of Germans and Vlasovtsy [Russian Liberation Army soldiers] who were driving the crowd. We heard yelling, "lie down with your faces to the ground". After these orders we could hear a volley of pistol shots. There might have been about 150 of them. Then we could distinctly hear that the executed were being placed on the logs. Besides, we could hear the timber begin to burn violently, from which we inferred that it might have been doused with some flammable liquid. Some time later we heard bones breaking.

At 3.00 p.m. on the same day we again heard the sounds of wheelbarrows with timber. We heard the voices of Poles and the Vlasovtsy. I suppose that the Poles were moving timber in the wheelbarrows and the Vlasovtsy were supervising them. We heard the voice of some boy who asked them not to be burnt but buried. When the work with the wheelbarrows was finished, we heard again – just as in the morning – the stamping of the crowd being driven into the factory courtyard. We could also hear the voices of the Germans and the Vlasovtsy, and orders, "lie down with your faces to the ground." A moment later shots were fired. We counted up to 150 of them. The bodies of the executed were put on a pile of wood and, just as in the morning, set on fire. The execution lasted until about dusk. As we could not hear any more sounds from our dungeon, I went with Woch to the courtyard through the chimney hole. The bodies had been already almost entirely burnt. There were some 150 of them.

The exact same executions took place twice a day on 26 and 27 August. On 28 August in the morning one more such execution took place. In the afternoon, however, judging by the



noise, a much larger group of Poles was driven into the factory courtyard. We could hear that people were being driven into the buildings. We heard the voices of children, men and women. We heard pistol shots in the courtyard and in the buildings. The piles and the building into which the people had been driven were set on fire. As the building was set on fire, the smoke reached our dungeon and we began to choke on it, so at the moment when all went quiet we went to the chimney proper. Through a gap in the base of the chimney, we saw human bodies burning on piles and a burning building. A moment later, when we had recovered from the smoke, we went outside to the open air. I counted approximately 200 bodies burning on the piles in the courtyard. One of the factory buildings was engulfed in flames. Apart from that, the Germans and the Vlasovtsy had set fire to two wooden sheds with people in them. When we approached them at some distance, we heard screams, "people, help, they set us on fire". The buildings were engulfed in flames and the doors were padlocked.

On the night of 28-29 August, we hid among the timber which was stored there, and during the day – in a pile of straw, and Woch spent the entire day in a potato field. On 29 August in the morning the Germans set fire to a large fence between the properties at number 57 and 59 on Okopowa Street. Woch, who was lying in the potato field near said fence, saw that the Vlasovtsy cut off a large chunk of the fence, made it into a pile and burnt some 20 executed people on it. On the same day, 29 August, two similar executions of Polish civilians took place in the factory courtyard at Okopowa Street 59.

On 29 August some Germans arrived to take hay from the haystack, which was 15 meters from the pile of straw in which we were hidden. We could distinctly hear their conversation. They were speaking German with a Masurian accent. They were talking about the execution that had taken place on the previous day. One of the Germans asked the other whether he would take the straw that day, and he answered that he would not take it until the following day, since they had a lot of Poles to execute that day. On the night of 29-30 August we went back to the cell. Every day, up until and including 27 September, the bodies of the people who had been executed en masse in the morning and in the afternoon were being burnt in the factory courtyard. I suppose that the Germans were executing Polish civilians from Warsaw over the course of capturing particular objectives. At first they were executing the inhabitants of Wola and the neighboring streets of Okopowa Street, and then from other districts of the city, especially from the Old Town. The Germans and the Vlasovtsy were burning the corpses of the executed men, women and children.



On 28 September at night we had to leave the cell, as Woch and Kalinowski, when they were taking out the bags of groats from the warehouse, spilled them and therefore aroused the suspicion of the Germans. We hid in the Jewish Cemetery. On the following day we were found by a group of partisans of Major Bicz and Capt. Maks. We stayed in the tombs with that group until 16 October.

After 28 September, when I was observing the partially burnt factory premises at Okopowa Street 59, [I noticed] that the Gestapo units, the gendarmerie units and the auxiliary "Ukrainian" units were roaming the premises. The units which were executing the Poles must have been stationed somewhere in the vicinity of Warsaw. It is possible that it was in Powązki-Miasteczko, since after setting fire to the pile with bodies we could hear the roar of departing cars.

The report was read out and signed.