



MARIA DZIERŻAWSKA

Warsaw, 12 February 1946, Judge S. Rybiński, delegated to the Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Poland, interviewed the person named below as a witness. Having advised the witness of the criminal liability for making false declarations and of the significance of the oath, the judge took an oath therefrom under Article 109 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

The witness testified as follows:

Name and surname	Maria Dzierżawska, <i>née</i> Tomalska
Date of birth	14 September 1902
Parents' names	Józef and Helena, <i>née</i> Mucharska
Occupation	housewife; husband works for the Society of Polish Saddlers and Harness Makers
Education	six classes of secondary school
Place of residence	Warsaw, Owsiana Street 12, flat 5
Religion	Roman Catholic
Criminal record	none

I have appeared at the office after reading an appeal posted in the newspapers. I hereby present my identification card, N 179580 (presented).

In 1943 I lived with my husband, Józef Dzierżawski, and two sons, Tadeusz and Jan, in the same apartment in which I currently reside.

During the night of 5/6 November 1943, at approximately 1.50 a.m., four Gestapo agents arrived at our apartment in the company of the night watchman. The watchman knocked on the door and asked whether Mr Dzierżawski lived there. I replied that he did, and asked who was there.



The watchman responded: 'Police'. When I opened the door, I saw the watchman in the company of four uniformed Gestapo officers, with death's heads on their caps. The Gestapo men entered our apartment. One of them, who spoke excellent Polish, said that they had received a report. Turning to my elder son, he asked him his name. Being told 'Tadeusz', he said: 'No'. He then asked my other son, and when he replied 'Jan Dzierżawski', he ordered him to dress.

The Gestapo men proceeded to conduct a superficial search, going through my sons' clothes. The one who spoke Polish asked: 'Where do you keep your revolvers?' To this, my elder son replied: 'What revolvers?' The Gestapo officer then ordered him to dress, too. However, they did not find anything during the search. I was extremely frightened and remained silent. My husband sat frozen with fear, and said nothing. It may be that this saved him from being taken away with our sons.

Before he left, my elder son asked whether he might say goodbye to us. The Gestapo officer replied that he may. My younger son asked if he could take his watch. He was permitted to do so. My husband, however, dissuaded him from taking it. Our sons said goodbye to us and left.

There was a police car parked on the street in front of the building, and a few more Gestapo men stood near it. The car left taking both our sons, whom we never saw again.

At the time, our elder son, Tadeusz, was 19, while the younger, Jan, was 17. Tadeusz had enrolled in clandestine classes, and was in the second class of secondary school; he also worked as a trainee in the 'Szpotański' electrotechnical company three days a week. Our younger son, Jan, was a third-year student at the municipal trade school.

As far as I know, both were members of a secret organisation, although they never admitted this to us. My husband and I only suspected it.

The day before they were arrested, I went down to the cellar to get some potatoes and found a few tied-up packages hidden beneath the potatoes. A barrel was sticking out of one of the packages, and I could tell that they contained rifles. When I returned home, I reproached my sons for endangering both themselves and us. They assured me that the rifles would be collected, that it is just a matter of a day or two. There were seven rifles.

When the Gestapo agents came to take our sons, the rifles were still in our cellar. In order not to make the situation worse, my husband and I remained silent when our sons were being taken away. We did not explain our behaviour to them. And some 10 minutes after they left,



we removed the rifles from our cellar. We hid them in the backyard under an overturned cart that was lying there. The next day at night, my husband buried them in the backyard.

Two days later we were visited by a friend of our elder son, who used to visit him frequently. We confided the whole situation to him. He promised to take care of the rifles and indeed, shortly after he came by with another boy and they removed the rifles from our backyard.

I don't know the exact names of either of them. I only remember that the first one was called Henio, that is, Henryk. I never saw him again after the uprising. I don't know where he is, or if he is still alive.

After my sons were arrested, I learned that at the Patronat on Krochmalna Street they were accepting parcels for those imprisoned in Pawiak. I took parcels for both my sons. The Gestapo officer who came around there to collect parcels with a list of those imprisoned accepted both parcels. In this way I was made aware that both sons were detained in Pawiak. This was on 12 November 1943.

Later on I learned that two public executions took place in Warsaw on that day. One on Nowy Świat, near Warecka Street, or more precisely at the street's outlet, and one in the Praga district, near Kępną Street. I had left the parcels for my sons at the Patronat around 11.00, while the executions took place between 11.00 and 12.00. The executions were held on Friday, 12 November, and on Sunday, 14 November I read the list of victims on a poster put up on a wall. Among the total number of 60 persons, the surname of my elder son, Tadeusz, was listed under number forty.

When I next delivered parcels for my sons, these containing clothing, both were at first accepted, however a few days later the parcel for Tadeusz was returned to me, while parcels intended for Jan continued to be accepted for five more weeks.

I could learn nothing more about Tadeusz's fate. Several times I submitted applications to the Gestapo, requesting information about what had happened to my son. I received no response. As regards my younger son, since parcels for him were still accepted for a certain time, I was able to determine that he remained in Pawiak from 6 November until 15 December 1943. From then on, no parcels for him were accepted. Moreover, I could not obtain any more information about him. Only that his surname was not mentioned in posters containing lists of persons executed by firing squad in public executions, which were put up around the city.



I read all of these posters diligently, and am therefore able to confirm this fact with certainty. If Jan was deported, we have not heard from him to date.

I didn't learn the surnames of the Gestapo men who arrested my sons, and I never met them again. I also don't know who of the Gestapo agents decided the fates of my sons. We had no other children apart from these two sons.

I know a Ms Oswald (I don't know her first name), who resides at Targowa Street 19, who, like myself, had lost a son, Jerzy Oswald, killed by the Germans in a public execution in January 1944. I visited her in hopes that maybe her son had survived and would return, and that maybe I would learn something about my own sons through her.

We received information from people who were returning from Germany that Oswald was supposedly seen in Mauthausen, even though he was listed amongst those executed by firing squad. People were also saying that the Reverend Kania – previously entered in the lists of victims of public executions that had been put up around Warsaw – had been seen in Mauthausen.

I don't know who brought this news.

I would like to add that on the night before he was arrested, my son Tadeusz had been perusing the secret gazette 'Żołnierz Polski zagranicą'. I don't know where he hid this magazine. I suppose that at the time of his arrest he had it on his person, in his clothes, and during the search in Pawiak this fact could have sealed his fate.

The report was read out.