

FRANCISZEK ZASADA

Warsaw, 23 May 1947. Member of the District Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes, [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 contents of Art. 107 and Art. 115 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, the witness testified as follows:

Name and surname	Franciszek Zasada
Names of parents	Franciszek and Antonina née Sochańska
Date of birth	10 August 1898 in Warsaw
Religious affiliation	Roman Catholic
Place of residence	Warsaw [...]
Education	four grades of secondary school
Profession	traffic controller for Warsaw Public Transport

From July of 1940 onward I was wanted by the German authorities for my membership in the Polish Nationality Protection Corps [Korpus Ochrony Polskości] and [I went into hiding] using forged documents with the assumed name Zaremba. During the Warsaw Uprising I took part in the action, fighting on the barricades at Młynarska Street and Górczewska Street.

On 3 August, when I was attempting to break through to my family who lived at Wolska Street 49, I was arrested by a Wehrmacht soldier. He ordered me to raise my hands, then, after searching me and checking my documents, he led me to Sokołowska Street, to the former Glass factory, where there was an inscription in German above the door saying "Russian prisoners-of-war camp." Later on I realised that both the transit camp for civilians in Saint Adalbert church and the house at Sokołowska Street were in control of the Warsaw

Gestapo, that Gestapo men and Pawiak authorities lived in the vicarage of the church opposite the former Glass factory.

While guiding me to Sokołowska Street, the gendarmerie was leading groups of men out of Bema Street, Skierniewicka Street, Górczewska Street, and Płocka Street; taken together they numbered some five thousand men. They were lined up in fours, a Gestapo officer checked their documents. I was also added to that group after my documents were checked again.

A little later I managed to split off from it. I also learned that those men were taken for forced labour near Modlin. I hid at Moczydło Street 30, in a house taken over by the "Hermann Göring" panzer group. The group was conducting operations in the area; I saw the soldiers come back in the evening weighed down with plunder. During the night from 6 to 7 August the German artillery was entrenched in the field between Górczewska Street and Moczydło Street.

In the morning of 7 August, the unit from the "Hermann Göring" division left Warsaw. Once they had left, a gendarmerie troop arrived at our house, shouting raus and shooting blind. The people were driven to Saint Adalbert church, where the men were sent to the former Glass factory at Sokołowska and the women were taken to the church. By the time I found myself by the house at Sokołowska, there were already many other men there. I saw the Gestapo men and gendarmes run in the crowd, pick out groups of 25 men who had caught their eye, and load them onto cars, which left and came back empty a few minutes later.

I didn't see how many cars were sent off that way. The men who had proof-of-employment documents from German companies, including me, were sent by the Gestapo to the fourth floor of the building. There was a group of fifty men there with me.

One of those present was Jakubowski, currently the secretary or chairman of the Tobacco Workers' Union [Związek Pracowników Tytoniowych], current address Ogrodowa Street 39, PPS district, and Tomasz Rozental, currently employed in the Warsaw Public Transport, Młynarska Street 2. We were locked in a room, with a second similar group of fifty in the adjacent room.

I later learned that one of the people in the second group was Miniewski. Some of the men were held on the second and third floors and then marched to the Western Railway Station.

Both of the groups locked up on the fourth floor were organised into a kommando for burning corpses. Its commissioner was a Gestapo officer named Neuman (he had one star on his shoulder), from Berlin.

Right away on the morning of 7 August our groups were taken outside, told to strip, and once we were down to our trousers we were driven down Sokołowska Street to Wolska Street and employed at burning bodies.

Together with my group, I was burning bodies at following locations:

At Wolska Street, on the odd-numbered side, in the yard of house number 21, we encountered bodies of some one hundred men who had been shot. We burnt them on site.

In the farming tools and machinery depot at Wolska Street 81 we encountered some three hundred bodies in cassocks and some eighty in civilian clothes. They were all shot. We burnt them on site.

On the same side of the street as the farming tools depot, but a few houses further, at Wolska Street 83, we encountered some fifty bodies of men who had been shot. Many bodies had wound dressings.

At Wolska Street 60, in the macaroni factory, in the middle of the yard, we encountered a pile of bodies some two metres high, twenty metres long, fifteen metres wide. They were mostly male bodies, only some of them women and children. Burning the pile took us many hours. By an eyeball estimate there were some two thousand bodies there. While we were burning them, a Gestapo man with three stars on his collar, a blonde man of average height with a swarthy face (I don't know the name), brought in some men in civilian clothes and shot them immediately. We burnt their bodies with the rest.

On the corner of Płocka Street our group was told to sit down, and then one of the Gestapo men spoke to us and said that we were being spared in exchange for our work burning bodies. He then sent six men to get food from nearby houses. After the food was brought back, we returned to Sokołowska Street. There we were again given fifty loaves of bread, fifty packets of cigarettes, and coffee. In the night we could hear volleys of gunshots.

On the next day, after assembling us in the yard, [the Germans] announced that any gold found with the bodies was to be handed over to [them], and that any living persons found in

the cellars were to be reported. In both cases a failure to follow the order was punishable by death. After the announcement we were sent off to burn bodies.

We entered the "Ursus" factory through a large gate from the Wolska Street side. The yard, from the gate all the way to a nook, going towards Skierniewicka Street, was covered with the bodies of men, women and children. There may have been five thousand of them. We worked all day burning them. In the middle of the large yard near Wolska Street we made a pyre. We put logs on the ground, then the bodies on the logs. We put planks on the bodies and then another layer of corpses. Then we poured a flammable liquid, brought to us by the Germans in twenty-litre cans, onto the pyre.

I don't know what kind of liquid it was, the cans had no labels. Much later I saw the remains of bones and skulls in the pyre.

I don't know if anyone took the ashes away.

In the evening we collected a smaller number of bodies from Wolska Street 47, 49 and 54. We took around one hundred bodies from number 47, and three from near a water-filled pit at 49. That evening we were given bandages, soap, towels, and linen, all plundered from neighbouring houses. Furthermore, two men were allowed to cook a meal.

On the next day we went from gate to gate along Wolska Street, collecting some minor quantities of corpses.

On 9 August, we arrived at Franaszek's factory. In the main yard and off to the side, from the shelter all the way to the gate, lay bodies of men, some six thousand. We worked all day burning them. I saw bodies of tram drivers, watchmen, and policemen. The Germans had found valuables and expensive foodstuffs such as sardines and vodka in the shelter of the main building of Franaszek's factory. Two horse carts were hauling them off. Neuman snatched a necklace worth over two hundred thousand zlotys then. From that point on we knew that the Gestapo men were stealing on their own.

On 10 August, we arrived at the public transport motor pool. Some three hundred bodies lay by the main workshops. We then moved on to Wolska Street 29, to Count Biernacki's palace. In its garden we encountered around six hundred bodies of women, children, and the elderly, including three priests; as I heard later, they were

Redemptorists from Karolkowa Street. Four or five bodies were right by the fence itself. We burnt the corpses on site.

At Wolska Street 24, where there is a lumber depot now, and where there used to be a merry-go-round and a dance hall, we found bodies of some one thousand men, women, and children. We burnt the bodies on site and the next day we took the remnants to a huge bomb crater. While carrying the corpses, I saw five or six bodies of freshly murdered men. We took those bodies to the crater as well and buried them some ten metres deep.

We then went to Saint Lazarus Hospital, and once there we gathered some five thousand bodies from the entire grounds, even from the beds and operating tables, in the first yard. We set up the pyres three times. Aside from the burnt bodies, many were buried.

From Saint Lazarus Hospital at Wolska Street, we went down Karolkowa Street to Leszno Street, where we found some 42 bodies of women and men in the factory on the corner of Karolkowa Street and Leszno Street.

From there, we went down Żytnia Street to Młynarska Street and the Evangelical cemetery. In the cemetery, especially towards the back, there were very many scattered bodies of insurgents, Germans, and civilians.

At Wolska Street 6, in the belt factory, we found some five hundred dead bodies in the yard and in the garden.

From there, we went down Wolska Street, past the flyover, and picked up bodies from every yard on the side of the even- numbered houses.

At Sowińskiego Park, we found some six thousand bodies. They were lying as if piled up near the park fence from the side of Wolska Street, up to some 1.4 metres of height, 25 metres long and 25 metres wide. We set up the pyres for burning in a park square.

My colleagues carried the bodies to Sowińskiego Park from Hankiewicz's house, opposite the park, and from the houses on Elekcyjna Street and Ordona Street,. I didn't go to collect from there, so I don't know exactly how many [corpses] were there.

While we were burning bodies at Ogrodowa Street 43 or 45, the Germans caught two men, father and son, aged 54 and 22, and shot them both.

At Elektoralna Street 11, Gestapo men killed eight women dragged out of an apartment, in Gutkowski's presence.

We took eighteen corpses from Elektoralna Street 18, some forty corpses from Ogrodowa Street 58, around one hundred corpses from the yard at Leszno Street 20, thirty or so corpses of women and children from Ogrodowa Street 5 or 7 (I cannot recall which).

From Górczewska Street 25 – the yard, the apartments, the staircase and the garden – some two hundred corpses.

From Płocka Street 31 through 26 (Wolski Hospital) some two hundred corpses, including many wounded from the surgery ward, with their arms and legs in splints. We took the bodies from the stairs, the hallway and the street.

At Przechodnia Street (I cannot recall the house number) we picked out some twenty corpses of women and children.

On 2 September, when the Old Town surrendered, we were told to wash buckets and carry water to a church for the evacuated civilians from the Old Town.

On 4 September 1944, Gutkowski Mieczysław (residing at Krochmalna Street 90 before the uprising, I don't know his current address) and I were taken to Pruszków by a Gestapo man whose name I don't know, in exchange for eighteen gold roubles we had found while burning bodies.

At that the report was concluded and read out.