



TADEUSZ WĄGROWSKI

Warsaw, 31 May 1946. Deputy Prosecutor Zofia Rudziewicz interviewed the person specified below as an unsworn witness. Having been advised of the criminal liability for making false declarations, the witness testified as follows:

Name and surname	Tadeusz Wągrowski
Date of birth	12 June 1904
Names of parents	Stanisław and Helena
Place of residence	Warsaw, Żulińskiego Street 6
Occupation	advocate
Religious	Roman Catholic
Criminal record	none
Education	Faculty of Law of the University of Warsaw

Being a member of the Bar Council of the Appellate Region in Warsaw [Izba Adwokacka Okręgu Apelacyjnego w Warszawie], I am familiar with the details of the persecution of Warsaw advocates. After the establishment of the German general administration authorities for the General Government [Generalne Gubernatorstwo], a former municipal court judge from the Jurisprudence Office of the Supreme Court named Wendorf, a Polish citizen of German nationality, appointed by Fischer, became the commissioner for a reorganization of the bar in the Warsaw district (*der Beauftragter für die Reorganisation der Anwaltschaft im Distrikt Warschau*).

Wendorf established the Advisory Board (*Beirat*). This was in breach of the Law on the Bar. The following persons were, among others, appointed to the *Beirat*: Domański, Gadomski, Jerzy Czerwiński.

At one of the first of the Beirat's meetings, Wendorf presented a draft law from the head of the Warsaw district concerning the screening of advocates with application of the Nuremberg clauses and requested an opinion. The entire Board, with the exception of one of its members, issued a negative opinion, arguing that the draft law as presented was inconsistent with Polish law, and that international conventions prohibited the introduction of substantial amendments to state law during occupation.

In retaliation for this opinion, upon being screened, everyone who had voted in favor of it was deleted from the list of advocates, as *politisch verdächtig*. In the course of the screening process, everyone was in turn summoned to the head of the Department of Justice in the district, since everyone was personally asked questions regarding the Jewish issue.

No-one gave an affirmative answer, some gave evasive answers, and the rest gave negative answers. Despite giving negative answers, these advocates were screened, and their names were put on proscription lists.

It was possible then to note that in the case of mass arrests based on the lists, almost everyone who provided a negative declaration was arrested.

I received the news about the course of the meeting chaired by Wendorf from my friend Jerzy Czerwiński, who was murdered in Auschwitz.

The first mass repression of advocates took place in the spring of 1940 and took the form of the detention of all persons present in the advocates' cafeteria located in the bar house (at Aleje Jerozolimskie 11). The Gestapo arrested around forty people; who were then sent to Auschwitz, from where no-one returned.

Subsequent mass arrests took place on 2 May 1940 and 3 July 1940, and the largest one occurred on the night between 11 and 12 July 1940, when one hundred and several dozen advocates were detained.

According to the news obtained from Pawiak prison through Advocate Sobociński's wife, who by means of bribery managed to get in touch with her imprisoned husband, none of the arrestees had been interrogated even once, and no particular charges were presented against anyone.

Several people among the arrestees were released due to their old age (advocates Szczepański, Rembertowicz), but the rest were sent to Auschwitz, or to Oranienburg, or to Mauthausen. They were sent to these camps having spent two months in Pawiak prison.

From among all these people, as far as I can remember, only a few single individuals came back, e.g. Advocate Sobociński or Świątkowski, the present minister. The rest died or were murdered in the camps.

These four mass arrests covered more than three hundred persons and were aimed solely at exterminating the intelligentsia. Knowing many of these men, I can say that they were not among those who took part in the operations of the resistance.

Apart from that, there were countless arrests under the suspicion of being a member of the resistance. This sometimes involved the arrests of family members of advocates. For example when in 1943 Advocate Jerzy Czerwiński was being arrested, his wife protested against the brutal conduct of the Gestapo agents towards her husband. In retaliation, she was arrested and murdered three weeks later. I know the exact details from Czerwińska's child and mother.

Apart from that, in cases of arrests based on the lists, it happened that if an advocate was not to be found at his law office, Germans would sometimes arrest his partner or trainee instead. Sometimes even all clients present in the waiting room would be detained.

In 1943, from 17 until 19 January, the so-called *Grosssäuberungsaktion* took place in the Warsaw district. This operation involved not only the local police of various kinds (Sicher-Ordnungs-Verkehrs and Schutz Polizei, Sicherheitsdienst, SD, SS-Polizei, the Gestapo, the Ukrainian Werk-Bahnschützen, and Latvians), but also the SD and the Gestapo specially brought from Radom and Cracow.

During this three-day operation people were dragged from all means of transportation, flats were plundered, people were halted in cinemas, restaurants, and theaters. It happened that people were dragged out of their homes in their underwear. In total, during these three days, around thirty thousand people were arrested, completely regardless of their sex or age.

The arrestees were gathered in particular districts in markets and larger squares; once there, they were loaded onto trucks and transported to Pawiak prison. In there, a selection process was



carried out in the courtyard, during which people who could prove they were employed in the so-called *Kriegswichtige Betriebe* were released. Next, people were put in prison cells; within the next few hours, as a result of individual complaints from the outside, a small fraction were released.

I am aware of the above circumstances based on personal observations and information from my fellow inmates, since I was detained during that operation on 17 January 1943, in the morning, in Praga.

At that time, German police troops of various formations closed off the quarter bordered by Poniatowskiego Bridge, Zieleniecka, Targowa, and Zygmuntowska Streets. Trams were able to enter this area freely. Since windows were covered with frost (the temperature was way below zero), it was impossible to see what was happening on the street. Near Różyckiego Bazaar the tram I was in was halted; the Gestapo men using whips threw people out into the street. Empty trams were directed to Ząbkowska Street.

Then, when a few thousand people were gathered in the street, police troops pushed the crowd to Różyckiego Bazaar, where we were loaded onto trucks. There were elderly men and boys just a few years old there, old women, young girls, and mothers with babies in their arms.

When we were brought to Pawiak prison, we found around six thousand people already there. We were confined to prison cells. While checking IDs, the Germans were stealing more valuable items and money from us. We were locked away in cell number 176 (a twelve-person cell), into which over one hundred and thirty people were crammed. It was not possible to sit or lie down. Moreover, radiators had been set too high, so that people were fainting due to the heat.

After thirty hours, we were loaded in groups onto trucks and transported to the Eastern Railway Station [Dworzec Wschodni]. I was transported in perhaps the tenth truck. In the railway station we were lined up in long columns and then, freezing, we were loaded onto freight wagons, from seventy up to ninety people per wagon. They were unbearably crowded. The wagons were sealed off, the train started after many hours of waiting. In Pawiak prison we had been given a loaf of bread per person for the journey.

The transport to Lublin took forty-eight hours, in temperatures reaching minus 30 degrees Celsius. The sudden transfer from the overheated cells in Pawiak prison to the freezing



freight wagons and the long journey in severe frost made almost all deported people seriously ill.

The Germans installed reflectors and machine guns on the open platforms at the rear end of each wagon.

If on the way anyone from the transport forced out boards and jumped off the moving train, police officers would illuminate the track with reflectors and fire machine guns. They staged a true massacre. By means of an example I wish to indicate that on the short distance between Puławy and Klementowicze stations (around 20 kilometers), I myself counted, looking only to one side of the track, over one hundred and ninety bodies. This was a part of the journey when the machine gun fire was less frequent. Apart from that, many people died as a result of falling onto the tracks or hitting a telegraph pole while jumping off.

My calculations from the above trip were later confirmed by railwaymen from Puławy station working in the resistance. According to their information, after three transports from Warsaw had passed, the hospital in Puławy was overcrowded.

I should note that the transport was convoyed by German police from Warsaw up to the railway station in Lublin, where the convoy was taken over by two Ukrainian companies and one SD company from Lublin.

The transport which departed from Warsaw was composed of sixty-odd wagons. Assuming there were eighty people on average in each wagon, it follows that there were around five thousand people on the transport. Out of this number, only around thirty-five hundred people made it to Lublin. The rest, with very few exceptions, died on the way, killed by police bullets.

Three more transports from Warsaw with people arrested in the same operation reached Lublin in the following days; two of these transports were more numerous and one was smaller.

The fate of the people who were in those transports was identical to the fate of those in my transport, and the deportees were murdered just the same.

Moreover, one more transport of people detained in the course of this police operation was also brought from provincial towns of the Warsaw district. On it were people from Siedlce,



Mińsk Mazowiecki, Sochaczew, Skierniewice, Grójec, Żyrardów and so forth. These people were brought by various means of transport to Dęblin, where they were eventually loaded onto trains. People from the province with whom I spoke mentioned that in provincial towns the round-ups had been connected with shootings in the streets, which caused many deaths.

All people transported to Lublin were placed in the Majdanek camp.

Administratively, the camp was subordinated to the Lublin Gestapo, but full jurisdiction over the people deported from Warsaw throughout this three-day operation rested solely with the Warsaw SD, and it was the Warsaw officers who decided how to treat and potentially whether to release any of the deportees. I know this, since I had memorized a number of SD officers' faces from Pawiak prison, and also since I was personally released by *Sturmabahnführer* Hessenauer from aleja Szucha. From other released persons I learned that their releases were decided upon by Warsaw officers as well.

In the Majdanek camp, the people brought from Warsaw were not given a single drop of water to drink throughout my stay there, that is for twenty-six days, as a result of which they ate the entire snow from barrack roofs and from the square, despite the fact that ten meters away from field four, where we were imprisoned, Jewish barracks were located in which there was a typhus epidemic.

The first food, in the form of boiled rotten potatoes, was served to the prisoners on the fourth day after their arrival.

Prisoners were quartered in horse barracks, five hundred people in each. The barracks were not made windproof and they had no heating. The prisoners slept on the floor. It was prohibited to leave the barracks between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. At night, leaky boxes for excrement were put in the barracks, and they were placed in such a manner that the fluids drained from the boxes towards the inside of the barrack. As a result of this, people lying on the ground woke up in the morning in a puddle of excrement, with their soaked-through clothes holding them fast to the frozen ground.

As a result of such conditions, all sorts of diseases, above all pneumonia and urinary tract infections, were developing at an astonishing rate. I think that at the time when I was released no more than five per cent of the prisoners were in a normal condition of health.



I was released after twenty-six days, as the five-hundred-and-fourteenth prisoner from the Warsaw operation, as a result of pleadings made on my behalf. After me, people were being released for a few more days, and then the releases ceased, allegedly due to the outbreak of a typhus epidemic.

I have not met anyone I knew at the camp ever again. I believe that they are lost.